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Esther E. Kim for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented on April 14, 2015.

Title: Cultivating Racial Identity Development within Asian Cultural Centers: Experiences of Asian American Students at a Predominantly White Institution.

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________________________________________________________________________

Daniel W. Newhart

This qualitative study examines the experiences of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution in the cultivation of their racial identity development with the support of resources and services on campus, specifically an Asian cultural center. Six participants at a large, public research institution in the Northwest region were individually interviewed and analyzed through a narrative inquiry methodology. The researcher utilized the frameworks of the Asian American Identity Development theory, Critical Race Theory, and Asian Critical Theory to make meaning of the experiences of the participants. Three themes emerged from the data: pre-college experiences and socialization, community and engagement, and support and growth. Each theme contributed to the experiences of the participants prior to and during their time at the institution. This study contributes to the existing literature focusing on Asian American students and their narratives to analyze the ways they initially developed and cultivated their racial identity. The researcher concludes with implications and recommendations for student affairs professionals to utilize on their campuses.
Cultivating Racial Identity Development within Asian Cultural Centers: Experiences of Asian American Students at a Predominantly White Institution

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Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Esther E. Kim, Author
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Asian Americans represent one of the fastest growing groups populations in the United States and within the college student population (Hune, 2002; Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2001). Prior to 2000, Asian American and Pacific Islander individuals were grouped into one category; the disaggregation allows for a clear analysis of the individual representation of the two groups (Liu, Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010). The disaggregation also allows us to recognize the acculturative differences between Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Liu et al., 2010). Disaggregation of data is a necessary step in order to fully understand the needs of the Asian American community and many other pan-ethnic communities (The White House, n.d.). The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) defines “Asian” to be a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. These countries include Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. For the purpose of this study, I will specifically examine Asian American students, not including Pacific Islander students, in order to ensure a clear representation of the Asian American student population. By not disaggregating the Asian population, it becomes a problematic approach given that there are varied differences of each ethnic group based on income, educational attainment and access, and history. The study will enhance the knowledge of student affairs professionals in assisting Asian American students to disrupt stereotypes and myths that view Asian Americans as a monolithic racial group, dismissing the variety of distinct ethnic cultures and values, and develop and enhance their racial identity.
development during their time in college (Alvarez, 2002; Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Museus, 2014).

In 2010, there was a reported 4.8% of the total population of the United State who identified as “Asian”, and 6.3% of the total student enrollment population identified as “Asian” who were attending a higher education institution (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Though these numbers are relatively small in comparison to other racially marginalized student populations, and most total student enrollment numbers in general, the Asian American student population is an important component of the U.S. higher education system and Asian American students offer many components to the diversity in culture and presence to a campus community (Liu et al., 2010).

Currently there are approximately 30 subgroups of individuals with differences in customs, language, and religious beliefs within the Asian American community (Wong & Halgin, 2006). Asian American individuals identify the United States as their home country, but trace their ancestry to countries from the continent, subcontinent, and islands of Asia (Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama et al., 2001). Asian Americans are often seen as a monolithic racial group, discounting the variety of ethnic identities and cultures within the Asian American community (Alvarez, 2002; Buenavista et al., 2009). Many Asian American students who grew up in the United States tend to identify as bicultural, evaluating their racial identity of their native cultural heritage in comparison to the Western society (Museus, 2014). Students who identify as bicultural have faced challenges reflecting on their social identities in relation to their interactions with fellow Asian and White-identified peers (Museus, 2014).
Literature suggests that the campus culture and community contribute to shaping the student’s experiences, either positively or negatively (Liu et al., 2010; Museus & Truong, 2009; Schlossberg, 1989). Because predominantly White institutions were historically established to serve primarily White-identified students, students of color can experience the college environment differently from their White peers and can perceive the campus climate as more hostile and unwelcoming (Museus, 2014). Some researchers have examined the level of involvement and engagement for Asian American students, but there is limited research on effective programming created to assist in the cultivation of their racial identity development (Alvarez, 2002; Buenavista et al., 2009). Effective programming suggests programs, services, and events hosted by student organizations or the institution that highlight various cultural backgrounds and provides an educational opportunity for all individuals to learn (Alvarez, 2002; Buenavista et al., 2009). Cultivating one’s racial identity development is defined by fostering the growth and encouraging the exploration of understanding and appreciating the culture and history of the racial group (Alvarez, 2002).

Asian American students are underrepresented in higher education contexts, based on knowledge and awareness of professionals due to the lack of current research and literature of the Asian American population (Kawaguchi, 2003; Museus, 2014; Museus & Kiang, 2009). Student affairs professionals have the opportunity and the responsibility to embrace multiculturalism and awareness of systems of oppression, to foster students’ understanding of transformative resistance, and to contribute to engage in social justice efforts to navigate social oppression in society.
(Museus, 2014). Student affairs professionals need to become well acquainted with the Asian American student population to provide programs and services that will increase the likelihood of students being retained at an institution (Kawaguchi, 2003). Thus, this will provide a sense of community with individuals of similar backgrounds and identities (Kawaguchi, 2003). Doing so can empower students of racially marginalized communities by providing opportunities to address systems of oppression, and learning to navigate through society as people of color (Museus, 2014).

By examining the utilization of campus resources and the campus climate to cultivate Asian American students’ racial identity at predominantly White institutions (PWI), this study will illuminate how an Asian cultural center can influence and contribute to the development process of students. The research question for this study is: In what ways are Asian American students supported by Asian cultural centers in their racial identity development at predominantly White institutions?

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of the topic, it is important to have an understanding of the key terms that will be present in this study. These definitions present as central focal points throughout the research.

- Asian American – “Asian Americans” is a widely used term used to describe individuals with similar phenotypes and cultural heritage (Liu et al., 2010) as well as those from South Asian descent. For the purpose of this study, I have differentiated and will use the term Asian American to only describe individuals who derive their national origin from the continent of Asia. I have
chosen to not to include Pacific Islander students under the umbrella term of Asian Americans as a focus to centralize on the lived experiences of students with origins from Asia. This is not a limitation but rather a focus not to homogenize the experiences of the entire Asian American community.

- **Race** – A socially constructed concept used to “justify the oppression of people of color through the denial of their rights, imposition of coercive labor, creating and perpetuation of slavery, and even extermination” (Museus, 2014, p. 11).

- **Racism** – “[A] social system that benefits a dominant racial group and allows that population to maintain disproportionate power and privilege over minority racial groups, their experiences, and their access to resources” (Museus, 2014, p. 12).

- **Racial Identity** – “[A] sense of collective identity that is based on the notion that the individual shares a common heritage or experience with members of a specific racial group” (Museus, Vue, Nguyen, & Yeung, 2013, p. 51).

- **Ethnic Identity** – “[A] sense of collective identity that is based on an individual’s understanding that [they share] a common origin, history, culture, and language with a specific cultural group” (Museus et al., 2013, p. 51).

- **Asian Cultural Centers** – A physical space within a higher education institution providing multiple foci for students, staff, and faculty to address the culture needs of individuals and to promote the “recognition of Asian American culture” (Liu et al., 2010, pp. 28–29).
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will provide a background of the Asian American student population, the model minority myth, and cultural centers that contribute in examining the utilization of Asian cultural centers in the development process of Asian American students, and how the needs of the students are met through programming and support of the cultural centers. Many Asian Americans students identify as bicultural and struggle to recognize their racial identity due to conflicting influences from the Western society. In understanding the past and present experiences of Asian American students, Asian Critical Theory, critical ethnography, and Asian American identity development theory are used as frameworks in order to enhance the importance of exploring racial identity in this chapter.

The Model Minority Myth

Asian American students have been exposed to many stereotypical and discriminatory remarks from peers or media due to the lack of knowledge of Asian cultures and heritages from the influences of the dominant society (Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama et al., 2001). Multiple studies have explored the stereotypes of Asian Americans as model minorities, being perceived as smart, hard-working, overachievers, and submissive (Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama et al., 2001; Wong & Halgin, 2006). Due to the external pressure from society to maintain this stereotype, Asian American students face an additional burden resulting in psychosocial dominance and the need to assimilate to the societal norms (Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002). Psychosocial dominance is defined as the pressure for racially ethnic minorities to conform to the Western society, and this influence causes Asian
American students to internalize their own race and neglect their ethnic identity (Kodama et al., 2002). Acknowledging and embracing one’s racial and ethnic identity for Asian American students plays a significant role in an individual’s self-identification in relation to other racial groups, and being able to differentiate experiences and influences based on context and saliency of identities (Museus et al., 2013). In addition, recognizing both racial and ethnic identities contributes to the recognition of the intersection of other social identities and the “interacting components of the identity development process for Asian American students” (Museus et al., 2013, p. 53).

The model minority myth can often be viewed as harmless or a positive stereotype, though it can be associated with negative ramifications (Museus & Kiang, 2009). This stereotype perceives Asian Americans to “achieve universal and unparalleled academic and occupational success” in comparison to other racial groups (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 6). Associating Asian American students with this stereotype does the Asian American community a disservice by continuing to perpetuate the stereotype and allowing the dominant society to overlook the concerns and realities students face within higher education (Museus & Kiang, 2009). The model minority myth can affect how Asian Americans reject their racial identity to disassociate with the negative implications of stereotypes and feel the need to alter themselves internally and externally to fit into the dominant society.

**Color-Blind Racial Views**

College can be a critical catalyst in challenging color-blind racial views (Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). Student affairs professionals need to examine
the developmental and psychological implications of race and racism within the community (Young & Takeuchi, 1998) in order to be knowledgeable of the ethnic group differences within Asian American communities (Alvarez, 2002). Color-blind racial ideology is a “dominant racially based framework that individuals, groups, and systems consciously or unconsciously use to justify the racial status quo or to explain away racial inequalities” (Neville et al., 2006, p. 276). Color-blindness ignores the differences of race and ethnicity, and continues to create a barrier of recognition of the powerful influence of the dominant society (Neville et al., 2006).

The opportunity to host programs and provide resources to benefit and educate all individuals at the institution is a motivating factor in order to understand and be knowledgeable of diverse cultures and student populations. Acknowledgment of multiculturalism helps to establish a harmonious environment that creates and enhances the campus culture of an institution; it also creates concrete relationships between students and staff, creating opportunities for individuals to grow personally and build respect for one another across the institution (Liu, 2012). As one of the social identities for Asian Americans, racial identity is examined through the intersection of a student’s multiple identities and their experiences through a critical race theory (CRT) framework. Asian critical theory (AsianCrit) and the Asian American identity development (AAID) theory will emphasize the racial identity development for Asian American students (Buenavista et al., 2009; Kim, 2001).

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) within the higher education context provides “an explanatory structure that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. society”
Race is a socially constructed term created by historically White-identified individuals to marginalize and oppress racially marginalized groups, denying their basic human rights (Museus, 2014; Quaye, 2013). Historically White-identified individuals have contributed to the disruptive systems of oppression, perpetuating racism and segregation based on race in order to maintain power and privilege to create a racial hierarchy (Museus, 2014). CRT gives voice to people of color who continue to be oppressed by the macro system (Museus, 2014), and recognizes race as omnipresent as “racist practices are still embedded systemically in institutions and organizations” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013; Quaye, 2013, p. 173). CRT analyzes the educational research and practice in higher education in relation to racial student groups, addressing the needs and concerns of policies and programs, specifically in this case, for Asian American students (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). CRT focuses on how macro systems influence the individual through systematic oppression, how the individual perceives themselves regarding their racial identification, and how salient their racial identity is to them (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Quaye, 2013). The five tenets of CRT are used as a framework to establish an understanding of how the generalization of Asian Americans is a “manifestation of a larger racial agenda that serves to maintain the dominance of Whites in the United States” (Buenavista et al., 2009, p. 71).

CRT analyzes five tenets that constitute its framework: *Intersectionality of Race and Racism, Challenge to Dominant Ideology, Commitment to Social Justice, Centrality of Experiential Knowledge, and Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Buenavista...
et al., 2009). *Intersectionality of Race and Racism* examines how multiple identities such as socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation all intersect with an individual’s racial identity, and how race is socially constructed and centers on the individual at the micro and macro-level (Buenavista et al., 2009). *Challenge to Dominant Ideology* through a CRT lens challenges the dominant group’s ideals and assertions that the educational system is equal and neutral for all individuals, neglecting to reflect on the color-blindness of the macro system (Buenavista et al., 2009). By recognizing systems of oppression within our society, CRT scholars show a *Commitment to Social Justice* work by trying to dismantle the subordination of people of color and to challenge the inequalities within higher education (Buenavista et al., 2009). *Centrality of Experiential Knowledge* states that while racism is endemic, it is important to utilize the significance of narratives and experiences of people of color to counteract the stereotypes and myths illustrated about racially marginalized groups (Buenavista et al., 2009). *Interdisciplinary Perspective* addresses the importance of collaboration of both the historical and contemporary contexts of interdisciplinary knowledge to understand a person of color’s perspective on racism in the current state of society (Buenavista et al., 2009).

Kodama et al. (2002) state the lack of research on race and racially marginalized student populations in traditional student development theories, and conclude that student development theories are raceless in regarding to only identify and relate to White-identified male students. In order to challenge race and racism in campus communities, it is essential for the larger institutional population to be educated about difference and cease to perpetuate the dominant narratives and
stereotypes of Asian American students (Ladson-Billings, 1998). There needs to be a value to a student’s voice, straying away from discounting their narratives and experiences but to use their stories to add awareness and counter the myths and stereotypes created by the dominant society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The use of narratives allows for students who have experienced discrimination based on race to be legitimatized and draw upon their lived experiences as means to educate others of the influences of external factors in their personal development process (Jones et al., 2013; Yosso et al., 2004)

**Asian Critical Theory**

The Asian Critical (AsianCrit) Theory framework is an extension of CRT to understand the effects of race and racism specifically in the lives and experiences of Asian Americans in society (Museus, 2014). Though CRT is a critical theory framework used to analyze race and racism influencing all individuals in society, there are branches of CRT such as Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), Tribal Critical Theory (TribalCrit), and Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) (Buenavista et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2013; Museus, 2014). These branches of CRT are designed for individuals to understand the framework pertaining to the racial groups they identify with (Buenavista et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2013; Museus, 2014). The categories of CRT can illuminate other communities of color to be advocates for one another while contributing to the larger discussion of how to take action against racism in society (Museus, 2014).

AsianCrit analyzes seven interconnected tenets that constitute its framework. The first four tenets build upon CRT but specifically incorporate additional
knowledge of the Asian American racial realities (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). The final three are “reiterations of the original CRT tenets that are critical in examining Asian American issues and experiences” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 23). The seven tenets include: Asianization; Transnational Context; (Re)Constructive History; Strategic (Anti)Essentialism; Intersectionality; Story, Theory, and Praxis; and Commitment to Social Justice.

Asianization focuses on society categorizing all Asian Americans into one monolithic group and continuing to perpetuate the stereotypes of the model minority, foreigners, and “honorary Whites” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Asian Americans are also victims of race-conscious policies concerning Affirmative Action policies and programs (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Transnational Context expands on CRT’s tenet to analyze how historical and current contexts impact Asian American lives such as imperialism, migration, and the conditions of the community (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). For example in 1965, the U.S. changed its immigration laws for specifically highly educated South Asians to work in the U.S. technology job market (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Re(Constructive) History highlights the exclusion of Asian American history, and advocating to include historical narratives of Asian Americans to contribute to the creation and development of the culture (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). This allows for a stronger understanding of Asian American history and culture, and a stronger identity and consciousness of the community (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Strategic (Anti)Essentialism is based on the assumption that race is a socially constructed term that can be constantly shaped by external forces, but this tenet is utilized to advocate and engage in understanding the Asian American community as
whole and the diversity within the community (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

Intersectionality for AsianCrit mirrors the original tenet from CRT, acknowledging “the omnipresent and intersecting nature of systems of social oppression, and rejecting the notion that any one form of oppression is more salient than others” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, pp. 26–27). Story, Theory, and Praxis build on the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling serves to recognize the value of stories, and how stories inform theory and practice for “positive transformative practices” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 27). Lastly, Commitment to Social Justice advocates for the elimination of racism, and recognizes the intersection of racism and other systems of oppression (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). These tenets provide a useful understanding to analyze the experiences of the Asian American community in the United States.

Museus (2014) illuminated the notion of assisting Asian Americans at a PWI by advocating for students by listening to their narratives and experiences that counteract the stereotypes and myths created by society through an AsianCrit lens. Institutions can work with students to make sure their voices are heard through counter-storytelling in order to establish programs and services on campus, such as cultural centers, that are visible to assist all students develop and enhance their racial identity development (Museus, 2014). Developing programs in cultural centers to create awareness of diverse cultures at PWIs can establish a community and pursue a welcoming campus climate.

**Asian American Identity Development Theory**

Jean Kim (2001) created the first Asian American identity development (AAID) theory to address Asian Americans coming to terms with their racial identity,
and to resolve identity conflict by living in a dominant, White society. Discussing systems of oppression and the effects systems have on racially marginalized population allows for context in understanding Asian American identity development for Asian American students (Museus, 2014). Developing one’s racial identity development is a process of how the individual defines themselves in relation to their particular racial group, and in result, plays a “central role in the educational experiences” in higher education (Museus, 2014, p. 75). Individuals create meaning of their own identity development through experience and adapting to new circumstances and environments (Museus, 2014).

Museus (2014) refers to Paulo Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to explain how systems of oppression are being reinforced by the oppressors who treat other human beings as objects, which dehumanizes them, thus reinforcing the distinct line between oppression and those who are oppressed. Freire (1970) refers to racially marginalized groups, such as Asian Americans, as oppressed in the dominant society. Though Kim (2001) examined only Japanese women for her study on Asian American identity development, the model is designed to be applicable to all individuals of Asian descent (Museus, 2014). Museus (2014) believes the theory can be applied to the entire Asian American population even though AAID is still the only identity development theory intentionally designed for Asian Americans. However, critiques state the theory is not generalizable to the entire racial group due to the limitation of the sampling population.

AAID provides five stages, in no linear fashion, as a result of the experiences and the student’s identities, experiences, and interactions are constantly changing
based on context and their development process (Museus, 2014). The five stages of the Asian American identity development model include: Ethnic Awareness, White Identification, Awakening of Socio Political Consciousness, Redirection to Asian American Consciousness, and Incorporation (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

Ethnic Awareness, the first stage of AAID, represents family members significantly influencing the exposure (or lack of) to ethnic activities and environments to one’s identity, usually in the adolescent phase (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Dependent on the level of exposure of ethnic awareness, individuals have positive or neutral self-concept (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

Individuals in the White Identification stage experience a strong sense of “difference” from their peers when entering the school system, and they become exposed to racial prejudice (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Individuals can begin to internalize White societal values and disregard their Asian American culture (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Students in this stage tend to be conflicted between merging the Western culture and their heritage culture, and find themselves to acculturating to the beliefs of the dominant society (Museus, 2014). This stage can be experienced in two ways: active White identification and passive White identification (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Asian Americans who begin to repress their Asian identity, actively identify with their White peers, and see no difference between themselves and their White peers experience active White identification (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

Those who experience passive White identification are actively aware of their Asian identity and though they don’t actively identify with the White identity, they accept White values, beliefs, and standards (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).
The *Awakening to Social Political Consciousness* stage occurs when individuals begin to adopt a new perspective and worldview, shifting their paradigm from personal responsibility to social responsibility (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Individuals begin to become more aware of racial oppression and their political consciousness, and learn to develop a more positive self-concept (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

Asian Americans in *Redirection to Asian American Consciousness* begin to embrace and to be immersed in their Asian American identity and acquire racial pride with their Asian heritage (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Through this process, individuals begin to realize the acts of racism and oppression directed towards Asian Americans from the dominant White society and become more cognizant of the importance of their racial and ethnic pride (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

In the final stage of AAID, *Incorporation*, the individual learns to value their racial culture and heritage and develop a positive self-concept, while establishing a firm and clear Asian American identity (Kim, 2001). As a result, the individual learns to appreciate identities others hold, and identifying with the dominant White society is no longer a salient issue (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

**Incorporating Critical Theories and Asian American Identity Development Theory**

The AsianCrit lens incorporated with AAID is used to understand the Asian American student population at PWIs for individuals who have a limited knowledge of the specific racial group. Those who are interested in seeking guidance and education about Asian racial groups should utilize the AsianCrit framework, not to
analyze the tenets, but use them to frame conversations when communicating and interacting with others. The integration of AsianCrit and AAID can also be utilized in the everyday experiences and interactions with Asian American students at PWIs, and how that can influence their connection to the larger campus community.

Integrating the framework of AAID, CRT, and AsianCrit within the environments of the Asian American cultural centers can allow students to converse with peers and staff to make meaning of their intersecting identities as a student of color at a PWI. Students can therefore ask professionals and peers for guidance in understanding their current stage in their identity development through continuous self-reflection and community dialogue (Museus, 2014).

CRT, AsianCrit, and AAID can provide the opportunity for professionals and student leaders within Asian culture centers to signify the importance of dialogue around racial identity and racial discrimination at a PWI (Museus, 2014). By incorporating the tenets of CRT into the learning objectives of the centers and into the intentionality of the center’s programming, Asian American students will be able to come to the realization of the institution as a good and supportive place for racially marginalized student populations (Alvarez, 2002; Museus, 2014). Counter-storytelling within CRT, for example, can be used to create community amongst students and professionals to vocalize their experiences of racial discrimination and microaggressions on campus, and use their experiences to educate peers in ways that not only affects the individual but the larger population as a whole (Buenavista et al., 2009). If institutions cannot see the importance of creating a diverse and accepting environment for all individuals, marginalized student populations will continue to feel
disconnected and feel even more marginalized during their collegiate experience (Buenavista et al., 2009). All individuals have the opportunity to create social change on campus by providing opportunities for racially marginalized student populations to feel connected in the midst of being a part of a predominantly White institution. An example of this opportunity can be met through the office of multicultural affairs and the involvement of cultural centers.

**Multicultural Affairs**

Multicultural affairs promotes diversity and multiculturalism in higher education campus communities through collaborative efforts amongst students, faculty and staff (Patton & Hannon, 2008). In the 1970s and early 1980s, the multicultural movement had been a focal point in higher education due to the value in diversity and multiculturalism of students; the movement created a commitment from the federal government and university leadership to increase the successful enrollment, matriculation, and graduate rates of racially marginalized groups (American Council on Education, 1985). Multicultural affairs and cultural centers have collaborated to provide the intellectual and physical space for students to collaborate, to challenge and support one another in the exploration of their own identity development through student development theories and networking, and to educate one another about the multifaceted ethnicities and cultures in the space (Young, 1991).

What makes multicultural affairs and cultural centers the central point for racially marginalized students is providing the safe space that is welcoming and understanding of the students’ needs and concerns (Patton & Hannon, 2008).
centers offer the opportunity to provide outreach education for all individuals (Patton & Hannon, 2008).

**Cultural Centers**

Cultural centers can be traced back to the mid-1960s to the 1970s as a physical space for students to view as a place of contentment and relief from the overwhelming stress and worry of academics (Young, 1991). Cultural centers support student development by interacting and engaging in dialogue about multiple cultures, ethnicities, and heritages to create a strong bond of trust and respect within the space (Young, 1991). Asian Americans are considered to be within similar phenotypes and cultural heritage, while most individual ethnic identities go unrecognized and are considered to be within the Asian homogenous group (Kim, 2001). Though cultural centers provide a space for Asian Americans at PWIs, being able to recognize the differences in ethnicities within the Asian student population is an important component to their racial and ethnic identity development (Hune, 2002). It creates a sense of awareness and acknowledgment of various cultures and history while additionally creating a sense of community amongst peers of similar racial identification (Hune, 2002). There are ethnic-specific needs and concerns that can help student affairs professionals serve students better (Hune, 2002). These needs and concerns include a sense of belonging, especially on a predominantly White campus with a small representation of racially marginalized student populations, and understanding the cultural influences that “hinder the success of Asian Americans in higher education” in relation to the model minority myth (Museus, 2014, p. 111; Schlossberg, 1989). Maintaining a visible cultural center at a PWI can establish a
physical space for students to interact and address the critical issues they face as a marginalized population (Hune, 2002). In a video lecture, Akbar (1993) provided four main functions for cultural centers to be successful in outreaching and educating the student population:

- The cultural center must contribute to identity development and validations;
- the cultural center must provide programs and services that encourage the broader university community to increase its knowledge of ethnic identity;
- the cultural center must be student-centered and serve as an advocate for students;
- and the cultural center, through programs and services, must bridge the gap between disciplines and administrative areas by encouraging collaboration.

Cultural centers must provide effective resources for students in order to advance their development in self-identification and be knowledgeable of how to interact in predominantly White communities or institutions (Akbar, 1993; Liu, Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010). To assist Asian American students, the establishment of an Asian cultural center on campus is crucial to focus on the development and access for the specific racial group (Liu et al., 2010).

The increase of racially marginalized students in higher education prompted institutions to create various race-identified cultural centers in collaboration with multicultural offices to serve and provide facilities and programs to address the needs and concerns of Asian American students (Liu et al., 2010; Wei, 1993). Ensuring Asian American students are provided with the resources to communicate and interact across racial and ethnic boundaries is important to fulfill holistic college experiences and student engagement (Patton & Hannon, 2008). The purpose of an Asian cultural center is to assist in the identity development for Asian Americans to enhance their understanding of their own cultural and ethnic knowledge while being at a community where they are marginalized in comparison to the larger student
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population (Patton & Hannon, 2008). Cultural centers are a physical and intellectual space for students to communicate with one another about their experiences growing up in predominantly White communities or their interactions with fellow White American students, and the differences they have experienced in their lifetime (Liu et al., 2010). While not all Asian American students are knowledgeable about their racial or ethnic identity, Asian American cultural centers have the primary purpose to “[promote] the recognition of Asian American culture” (Liu et al., 2010, p. 29).

Promoting programs and services such as peer mentorship programs, events highlighting various countries and cultures, or a physical space for students to feel comfortable can provide a sense of community (Liu et al., 2010). Planning activities that highlight the diverse cultures of the Asian American community offer the campus community the opportunity to be informed of the complexities of the Asian American identity and partake in the recognition of the intersection of culture and community (Liu et al., 2010). Students and staff can play a critical role in programming activities such as heritage celebrations to bring the community together to engage and participate for educational and social purposes (Liu et al., 2010). While some may argue that heritage celebrations are essentializing the Asian American community, intentional programming can help illuminate to increase awareness of multiple cultures and ethnicities in an educational and social environment (Liu et al., 2010).

Cultivating and developing one’s racial and ethnic identity allows the individual to gain an appreciation and understanding of their heritage and to make meaning of their identities (Alvarez, 2002). When an Asian American student gains full acceptance of their racial identity, it creates a strong sense of self, and thus, the
ability to identify the intersection of identities that have been oppressed according to the systems of oppression such as gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and, religion (Alvarez, 2002; Jones & Abes, 2013).

**Summary**

Asian American students in higher education are continuing to increase in number; for institutions to fully support students in cultivating their racial identity development, dialogue around race and support should be discussed (Hune, 2002; Liu et al., 2010; Museus, 2014). Institutions need to be supportive in understanding how to disrupt societal stereotypes and prejudice amongst Asian American students to create a space to feel comfortable and a sense of belonging at a PWI. By enhancing programs and services at cultural centers that use the framework of critical race theory, Asian critical theory, and the Asian American identity development theory, student affairs professionals can have the tools to support students at PWIs. Asian American students are vital to the student population, and their voices and experiences need to be heard in order to develop effective programming for their college experience and an inclusive environment at the institution.

Due to the lack of literature focusing to address the support and programming of cultural centers in cultivating Asian American identity development, this study will demonstrate the need for future research on how the two concepts intersect. At multiple higher education institutions, cultural centers have a physical presence with the student population and are used to support students in their social, academic, and personal needs which include their racial identity development process (Liu et al., 2010). Cultural centers can have a large impact on the student’s experience at an
institution, and developing intentional programming that allows students to explore their racial and cultural awareness can be successful to foster their Asian American identity. The following chapter will highlight the method and methodology of the research study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study examines the lived experiences of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution in cultivating their racial identity development with the support of Asian cultural centers. This chapter outlines the research questions, research design, researcher background, sampling and participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the data collection. I conducted semi-structured interviews (Jones et al., 2013) with Asian American students at a predominantly White institution. The participants’ narratives and reflections will assist to illuminate the formation of racial identity, and the external influences and the institution’s role in the meaning making process. This study will help student affairs professionals to understand the importance of supporting Asian American students in their racial identity development, and to provide adequate support and services to enhance the students’ knowledge and awareness of their own identity.

Research Questions

This research is guided by one research question and three sub-questions:

In what ways are Asian American students supported by the Asian cultural center in their racial identity development at predominantly White institutions?

- How has context (familial, societal, and institutional) influenced Asian American students’ racial identity development up until college?
- How have cultural centers provided a sense of identity and self-awareness for Asian American students?
- How has the institution been supporting Asian American students in exploring their racial identity during their time in college?
Research Design

To understand the past experiences of Asian American students, this study acknowledges the importance of counter-storytelling within critical race theory (CRT) by utilizing a qualitative approach to allow participants to respond openly to share their experiences that have influenced their Asian American identity (Buenavista et al., 2009; Museus, 2014). A qualitative approach allows the researcher to acknowledge the multiple perspectives of experiences and to illustrate the narratives in a way that disrupts the stereotypes and narratives of the dominant society. The research design will explain all aspects of the research (e.g., epistemology, critical ethnography, theoretical framework, methodology, and method) in exploring the racial identity development of Asian American students.

Epistemology. This study uses an interpretive philosophical perspective of the research. Interpretive research assumes that “reality is socially constructed” and there are multiple realities rather a single interpretation (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Constructivism is often interchangeable with interpretivism (Merriam, 2009). This study will examine the racial identity development process of multiple participants with varying narratives and reflections. While there is not one reality, common themes will emerge in the participants’ narratives that connect multiple experiences to each other. These common themes, or multiple realities, will provide the opportunity to continue to explore the similarities of oppression, discrimination, and reflections. Qualitative research, based on an interpretive worldview, centralizes the importance of individuals constructing reality within the interactions of the real world (Merriam, 2009).
**Critical ethnography.** Critical ethnography is often in response to the social trends of power, privilege, and authority, and marginalizing individuals for their oppressive identities based on socially constructed terms and concepts (Berg & Lune, 2012). “Critical ethnography refers to the reflective process of choosing between conceptual alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4).

Though research is never really neutral, researchers must maintain a value-neutral position to neither impose their own views or take any stands on social or political issues upon their participants (Berg & Lune, 2012). However, because this study is using a Critical Race Theory framework, social and political views of the dominant society on race will be centric to the purpose of this study and the narratives of the participants. Finding a balance of not imposing personal views or opinions upon the participants but highlighting counterstorytelling to challenge the dominant society will be utilized for participants to analyze and reflect throughout the interview process. Thomas (1993) compares critical ethnography to conventional ethnography with a more distinctive political purpose. While “conventional ethnographers generally speak for their subjects”, critical ethnographers, in contrast, speak to an audience on behalf of their subjects in order to “[empower] them by giving more authority to the subjects’ voice” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4).

**Theoretical approach.** Understanding the lived experiences of Asian American students and how they communicate with peers in relation to identity development through CRT will be used to analyze the systems of oppression and the contextual influences that impact their racial identity (Buenavista et al., 2009; Jones
et al., 2013). CRT, specifically AsianCrit, will be the theoretical perspective used to analyze and frame the interview questions (Buenavista et al., 2009; Museus, 2014). Understanding race as a salient core identity for many students of color will be emphasized, and how the CRT perspective can be interwoven with tenets of counterstorytelling and social construction to emphasize the role that stereotypes external influences play in racial identity development (Museus, 2014). By incorporating CRT into the narrative inquiry methodology, this study will value the meaning making process of using stories and experiences of students to highlight concerns and needs in relation to racial identity development. It is important for the researcher to make meaning of their own bias while not to dismiss it (Jones et al., 2013).

The researcher will examine their own identity in relation to the study, and will observe the level of engagement of the participants. It is just as important for the researcher to enhance the understanding of their own racial identity development while interviewing the participants in the process to continue inquiring about the research and topic in order to best support Asian American students through necessary campus resources. The researcher should not be utilizing the participants’ interviews as a way to incorporate their experiences to be examined but should already be knowledgeable about their own stage in their racial identity development.

**Methodology.** Narrative inquiry relies on the meaning making process of understanding the lived experiences of an individual (Jones et al., 2013). Narrative inquiry is a way for individuals to make sense of themselves and the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Wells, 2011). Creswell (2013) states that as a methodology, “[narrative inquiry] begins with the experiences as
expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals” (p. 54). As the researcher, I am interested in how participants share their narratives and the content of their experiences because the tone and the context of the stories can add volumes to how the experiences are interpreted, and how participants choose to make meaning of the narratives that they share.

There are multiple forms of narrative inquiry in research practices and this study will exemplify a biographic study in which “the researcher writes and records the experiences of [participants]” (Creswell, 2013). Within narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place acknowledges to address and define the focus of the study to the experiences of the participants (Jones et al., 2013). Temporality utilizes the time in which an individual experiences their reality, and the correlation to their past and present experiences in defining their future experiences (Jones et al., 2013). Sociality refers to the environment, external forces, and the relationship with others that capture the experiences for the individual (Jones et al., 2013). Lastly, place refers to the concrete physical boundaries of place and where the experiences occur (Jones et al., 2013). By using the framework of these three components, the researcher can analyze the different contexts in which participants share their experiences and how one component may be more emphasized than others in how that may be interpreted.

As a researcher, I can acknowledge what is said and interpreted within the experiences, and detect what is not said in understanding the individual’s narratives (Jones et al., 2013). Narratives are lived experiences, a social action, and as a researcher, I should be more interested in the “narrative reality in any local context – what does and doesn’t get said, about what, why, how, and to whom – than [I am in
understanding each individual story” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 83). It is important in a narrative inquiry approach to share the experiences that will create voice for participants in explaining their stories in how they see the world (Merriam, 2009).

**Method.** This study utilized the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews to identify and analyze the lived experiences of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution (Jones et al., 2013). Qualitative research is the essence to make meaning of individuals’ interpretations of the world and the experiences of their own lives (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the students’ perspective of the support of programs at cultural centers that cultivate the racial identity development of Asian American students (Jones et al., 2013). Through these individual interviews, I was able to understand how socialization, context, and stereotypes have influenced the students’ racial development process and the perception of self in relation to the dominant society and contextual influences. Semi-structured interview questions were chosen in allowing the participants to answer questions fluidly in open-answered responses and for the research to ask follow-up questions to responses as needed or for further clarification.

**Researcher Background**

As the researcher, it is important to disclose my bias, perspectives, and opinions for the interested of this study (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009). As a first-generation Asian American, both of my parents immigrated from South Korea to the United States. I grew up in multiple predominantly White communities that have defined, or so I thought, my racial identity and my interactions, or lack thereof, with
various racial groups. Growing up in predominantly White communities with mostly
White-identified peer groups and classmates, racial identity was rarely discussed or
mentioned within the classroom or in co-curricular environments throughout my K-16
education. My first experience hearing “racial identity development” was in graduate
school, in a student development theory course, where I began to explore and identify
my own racial identity, and how my environments have influenced my perspectives
on racial exploration and identifying racial discrimination amongst the Asian
American community. My personal experiences have influenced and shaped my
perspectives as an individual and a researcher in exploring Asian American identity
development.

From my personal experiences, I am aware of the challenges that come with
representing a racially marginalized student population in a dominant White
community at an institution. I value the opportunities and services provided for
various racial groups to feel a sense of belonging and to feel that they matter as
students and individuals in a large campus environment. I understand as an individual
who identifies with the Asian American community, I must manage my personal
biases in a way that will not affect the study and the interpretations of the participants’
experiences (Jones et al., 2013). As an Asian American individual and the research of
the study, I acknowledge that the choice of interview questions, my research topic,
and the recruitment of participants can affect the study. However, my racial identity
may make participants more willing to participate, speak freely of their personal
experiences, and candidly share their stories because we share a common social
identity. This common understanding provides a greater amount of trust and
cooperation from the participants because I would be able to identify or relate to their experiences.

**Sampling and Participant Recruitment**

Multiple narrative inquiry researchers suggest using a sampling procedure in conducting narrative research (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). A sampling procedure specifically with narrative analysis provides a method for conducting a narrative study and represents “an information collection of topics” (Creswell, 2013). The procedure highlights five steps including: determining if the research question fits the narrative research; select one or two individuals to gather stories and experiences; collect information about the context of these stories; analyze the participants’ narratives and “restory” by reorganizing them into a framework; and collaborate with participants to actively involve them in the research (Creswell, 2013). This informal procedure provides a guideline of how to best honor the narratives of the participants and conduct research in an ethnical manner.

Asian American students will be identified and contacted to participate in the research based on the participant criteria listed below. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the latest enrollment summary, Asian American students comprise only 5.7% of the total student population in higher education (“Digest of Education Statistics, 2013,” 2013). Due this small percentage of students within the nation, the number of participants, six total, will reflect the national percentage and the percentage of Asian Americans at the research site which is a predominantly White institution in the Northwest region. The site for the study will be referred to by the pseudonym, Corley University. Corley University is a large,
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public, land-grant institution with a small population of students of color. Corley University hosts a total student population upwards of 27,000 with an Asian American representation of approximately 2,000 students.

**Participant criteria.** Participants were selected for this study based on certain criteria for the research. The criteria are:

- **Asian American identification** – Participants had to indicate their racial and ethnic identity and self-identify as Asian American. Though the study examines racial identity development, it was favored to have participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to allow the research to examine the Asian American community. In this study, Asian American refers to a person having origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.

- **Domestic student** – Participants had to indicate whether they were a domestic student for the purpose of the study with a Western context. Participants were either born or raised in the United States.

- **First-generation Asian American** – Participants had to self-identify at least as a first-generation Asian American to identify the cultural differences of biculturalism and to represent varying ways individuals were brought up.

- **Member of an Asian cultural center** – Participants were asked to participate if they have been actively involved of an Asian cultural center for more than one academic year. A student who had been involvement in student organizations affiliated with the Asian cultural center would also qualify.
**Participant recruitment.** In order to find participants for the study, I distributed an email letter through a professional staff member of an Asian cultural center, advisors of Asian student organizations, and various Asian student organization listservs to solicit participation. The email described the purpose of the study, the participant criteria, and how potential participants were able to contact me directly for further information or to participate in the study. The email was distributed and shared through various networks to reach as many potential participants as possible.

**Data Collection**

I interviewed six participants from Corley University who were selected based on the participant criteria. All six participants who decided to partake in my study were scheduled for a semi-structured individual interview. Each participant was asked ten predetermined open-ended questions with the interview lasting approximately one hour. The participants were free to skip any question they would prefer not to answer. Due to a semi-structured format, I asked follow-up or clarifying questions dependent on the participant’s responses.

It is important to protect the identities of the participants in this study due to the risk of observing and involving a marginalized student population. To protect their confidentiality, participants were required to review the consent form and the researcher documented verbal consent for all participants. The researcher also requested permission of the participants to use a digital audio recording device during the interview for data collection. Those who chose not to be recorded could not continue in the study. All six initial participants agreed to the recording of the
interviews. The digital recordings, files, and written documents were held in safekeeping of the researcher. The participants chose their own pseudonyms before the start of each interview.

The researcher used a research journal to document observations of the participant, including tone, body movements, facial expressions, and the environment of the interview. All individual interviews took place in a study room in the university library. After each transcription, the researcher contacted the participant to verify the transcribed documents and to revise their interviews as necessary. The researcher transcribed the data to encode common themes in the transcripts to reveal similarities in the participants’ experiences. The researcher also removed all personal identifiable information connected to each participant in order to provide confidentiality.

**Participant Overview**

A total number of six students participated in this study. Individuals chose their own pseudonym to remain anonymous and confidential. Any identifiable data of the participants were removed from the original data. All initial six interested participants met the qualifications to participate in the study. The criteria included participants to self-identify as Asian American, be a domestic student, identify at least as a first-generation Asian American, and be a member of the Asian cultural center or be involved with a student organization that is supported by the Asian cultural center.

The six participants identified as current undergraduate students at Corley University in their academic third, fourth, or fifth year. All participants were traditionally aged college students. Their majors varied from Microbiology to History and Liberal Arts. Three of the six participants identified as female and three identified
as male. All six participants identified their race as Asian or Asian American. Three participants identified their ethnicity as Vietnamese, one identified as mixed race of Arab and Malay, one identified as Laotian, and one as Indian. Two participants grew up in predominantly White communities and four come from high immigrant communities.

**Data Analysis**

In narrative inquiry, it is important to value the participants’ experiences and perspective in the study and not to interpret the data to align with the researcher’s own perspective (Jones et al., 2013; Merriam, 2009). The data from the individual interviews were examined through transcriptions of the participants to seek common themes of their lived experiences as Asian American students at a predominantly White institution, and their involvement with the Asian cultural center in cultivating their racial identity development. Since the researcher is the primary instrument, I cannot eliminate my own bias but I can interpret the data that honors the narratives of the participants that help shape the research and the data collection (Merriam, 2009). This can be done by not providing personal experiences or reflections of the researcher in the interview, and not to probe certain questions that may be irrelevant to the participants’ experiences. Throughout the interviews and the data analysis, I have to remember that I am not sharing my narrative but sharing the experiences of others in shaping how this research can help future higher education professionals and their work with Asian American students.
Analyzing data in narrative inquiry requires a process in order to gain an understanding of the experiences and to examine how the experiences contribute to the holistic understanding of each experience’s meaning (Firestone, 1987; Jones et al., 2013). Jones et al. (2013) break down the technique of data analysis of open and initial coding, and axial and focused coding. Open and initial coding is the first phase of breaking the data into manageable pieces in order to explore in-depth of the information and ideas in the data (Jones et al., 2013). Without having preconceived notions of what the initial themes should be, the researcher remains open and finds commonalities within the data in relation to the research as a whole (Jones et al., 2013). Axial and focused coding provides the process of relating larger concepts to each other and creating a more focused direction of the commonality of the themes and allow the researcher to understand the meanings of the emerging themes (Jones et al., 2013).

The objective of the data analysis is to establish authenticity and trustworthiness in the research as a framework (Maxwell, 2005). Validity is relative and has to be proven as a way to be assessed in relationship to the purpose of the research rather than the conclusion itself (Maxwell, 2005). In order to establish validity in the study, the researcher assesses the participants’ construction of reality and how they understand the world and their experiences (Merriam, 2009). To ensure that trustworthiness is credible in the research, the researcher is responsible to abide by their ethics in a manner that is valid for all participants (Merriam, 2009).

**Ethics training.** The researcher and the principle investigator completed the Course in the Protection of Human Research Subjects through the Collaborative
Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and are certified to conduct research on human subjects. The principle investigator taught a research and assessment course for graduate students and is knowledgeable about research ethics. The researcher took a research and assessment course from the principle investigator and understood the importance of research ethics. The study had also been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order to begin collecting data and interviewing participants at the institution for the study.

**Member checking.** After transcribing the data from the individual interviews, the researcher provided sufficient time for the participants to verify the documents and revise the transcripts if necessary. Member checking is a way to validate the responses of the participants, to interpret what was said, and to identify if there were any responses that may have been misunderstood by the researcher (Maxwell, 2005). Participants should be able to recognize their own experiences in the interpretations of the questions while allowing the researcher to make meaning of the data to reflect the research due to the nature of narrative inquiry (Merriam, 2009). Lather (2003) emphasizes the importance of the researcher to see member checking as “an elaboration on the emerging findings and treated as additional data” and not as verification of the data (p. 198).

**Audit trail.** Considering validity is of importance in qualitative research, documenting all observation, data, categories, and decisions made in the process of the research is important to collect and make sure all information is consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). Keeping a research journal to “write your reflections, your questions, and your decisions you make in regard to problems, issues,
or ideas you encounter in collecting data” is valuable to interpret in the data analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). It is essential to write in detail every aspect of the study itself of how it was conducted and how the researcher has analyzed the transcriptions of the interviews because documentation allows the researcher to engage with the data and its interpretations while recognizing the importance of how decisions were made throughout the process (Merriam, 2009).

**Limitations of Data Collection**

Due to the small percentage of Asian American student representation at a predominantly White institution, recruiting six participants who identify as Asian American and are involved with the Asian cultural center was challenging. Some of the participants partook in the study based on their involvement with Asian American student organizations that are supported by the Asian cultural center. Unintentionally half of the participants self-identified as Vietnamese American. However, I was able to recruit participants from various ethnic backgrounds, genders, and academic majors.

By emphasizing the importance of CRT’s tenet of counter-storytelling, in which the concept of sharing the students’ experiences were discussed in the interviews, students were more aligned to participate and exploit the negative experiences and narratives associated with the racially marginalized group (Buena vista et al., 2009). Counter-storytelling connects well with narrative inquiry in using stories and allowing the participants to explore their interpretations of the experiences (Jones et al., 2013). Incorporating critical theory within narrative inquiry also addresses the systems of privilege, power, and oppression in how the narratives...
are shared, and how context has influenced how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Jones et al., 2013).

Based on the interviews conducted, the researcher’s notion was that the participants answered each question honestly and authentically while the researcher was able to find common themes amongst the answers, and find ways to integrate these themes into the follow-up research questions. Therefore, the researcher was able to create a fluid process for participants to answer questions, deriving common themes within the responses to assist in the study. Future researchers should conduct interviews with participants at multiple predominantly White institutions in the regional area.

**Summary**

In this qualitative study, the researcher examined the experiences of Asian American students in their cultivation of racial identity development with the support of the Asian cultural center at a predominantly White institution in the Northwest region of the United States. The researcher utilized the frameworks of critical race theory and critical ethnography to highlight the value of storytelling and to share the narratives of Asian American students to examine the development of their racial identity at a predominantly White institution. The researcher interviewed six participants and transcribed the interviews to develop themes that emerged in the data. The findings of this study will follow in chapter four.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

Through six semi-structured interviews, this study seeks an understanding of the cultivation of racial identity development of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution in the Northwest region. The results illuminate the research questions proposed for this study, specifically:

- How has context (familial, societal, and institutional) influenced Asian American students’ racial identity development up until college?
- How have cultural centers provided a sense of identity and self-awareness for Asian American students?
- How has the institution been supporting Asian American students in exploring their racial identity during their time in college?

The participant interviews were transcribed and coded to derive three themes that emerged from the data: precollege experiences and socialization, community and engagement, and support and personal development. The themes in this chapter are discussed with narratives, direct quotes of the participants, which reflect the analysis of narrative inquiry in understanding and making meaning of the lived experiences of an individual (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2013).

Within narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place were acknowledged and utilized in analyzing the context of the participants’ experiences (Jones et al., 2013). Temporality utilizes the events under study which are in temporal transition (Clandinin, 2006). This directs the attention towards the past, present, and future of the people, places, and things under study (Clandinin, 2006; Jones et al., 2013). Sociality uses the environment and external forces that influence the events of the
individual (Jones et al., 2013). Place is influenced by the physical boundaries in which the events and inquiry take place (Clandinin, 2006; Jones et al., 2013). Place recognizes that “all events occur in some place” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 70). The specificity of place is crucial for the research because it directly impacts the individual and the quality of their told experiences (Clandinin, 2006).

Asian critical theory (AsianCrit) incorporated with the Asian American identity development (AAID) theory framed the theoretical perspective to understand the experiences of Asian American students (Museus, 2014). Museus and Iftikar (2013) provide an AsianCrit perspective that incorporates the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine and understand “the ways that racism affects Asian Americans in the United States” (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 23). It is intended to contribute to the larger discussion of learning how to support and understand the experiences of other communities of color, racism, and Asian Americans (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). As referenced in chapter two, Museus and Iftikar (2013) explain the seven tenets of AsianCrit: Asianization; Transnational Context; (Re)Constructive History; Strategic (Anti)Essentialism; Intersectionality; Story, Theory, and Praxis; and Commitment to Social Justice.

The following sections will introduce the six participants, illuminate their experiences as Asian American students at Corley University, and highlight the three general themes of the study with the participants’ narratives and the researcher’s analysis.
Table 1 presents an overview of the six participants in the study. The table is categorized into participant pseudonyms, year in college, Asian American generation, race, ethnicity, and major in school.

Table 1

**Participant Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Asian American Generation</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdullah</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian American, Arab American</td>
<td>Malay, Arab</td>
<td>History; Liberal Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baughb</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>General Sciences; Pre-Pharm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Laotian</td>
<td>BioHealth Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Microbiology Pre-Med</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Summaries**

**Abdullah.** Abdullah is a fourth-year student double majoring in History and Liberal Arts, and minoring in Asian Studies and Sociology. Abdullah was born in Singapore and immigrated to the United States at the age of five where he lived in
predominantly immigrant refugee communities. Abdullah identifies as mixed race, both Asian American and Arab American, and he identifies ethnically as Malay and Arab. Abdullah moved out of the United States for a few years before returning for his college experience at Corley University. In this transition to the university, Abdullah was looking for similar friends and communities as the ones he grew up with at Corley. Initially, he attended the Asian cultural center’s open house and various Asian American student organizations where he found his community and his relationships with peers who identified similarly to him.

**Angela.** Angela is a first-generation college student in her third year majoring in Public Health. She has an older sister at Corley that has provided her assistance in her transition to the university in connecting to various student organizations in her first year including the Vietnamese student organization which she has been heavily involved in for three years. Angela identifies as Vietnamese due to the language spoken primarily at home although her ethnicities include Chinese, Vietnamese, and Caucasian. Angela grew up in a predominantly Asian community while attending diverse institutions for her K-12 education. Most of her K-12 institutions consisted of majority students of color or immigrant children.

**Ruby.** Ruby is a fifth-year, first-generation college student majoring in Public Health and minoring in Psychology. She identifies as Vietnamese American and comes from a low-socioeconomic status and immigrant background. She identifies as Vietnamese because she speaks Vietnamese at home, and was raised with Vietnamese traditions. Ruby is very involved in multiple student organizations and departments on campus. She challenges her peers to disrupt stereotypes and negative narratives of
Asian Americans while educating others on the complexity of the Asian American identity.

**Sean.** Sean is a third-year, BioHealth Sciences major. Sean identifies as Laotian, and grew up in predominantly White communities and attended predominantly White institutions for his K-12 education. Without many Asian friends growing up, Sean initially sought out the Asian cultural center in his first year to explore his racial identity and was shocked to recognize the injustices in the world involving racism. In his connection to the Asian cultural center, Sean found community with the staff and students who utilize and work at the center.

**Baughb.** Baughb is a first-generation immigrant in his third-year at Corley, majoring in General Sciences with the option of Pre-Pharmacy. Baughb identifies as Vietnamese. He was born in Malaysia and immigrated to the United States when he was around one year old. Although he and his family moved around a lot, the neighborhoods he grew up in were predominantly of color. His first realization as a person of color was in high school when a peer pointed out his race to him. Utilizing the Asian cultural center allows him to engage in conversations of race and inequalities with students at the university.

**Tara.** Tara is a third-year majoring in Microbiology on the Pre-Med track with a minor in Psychology and Chemistry. Tara identifies as Indian American. She was born in India and immigrated when she was four or five years old. She grew up in a predominantly White community, attending predominantly White schools for her K-12 education. For two years, Tara was very involved with the Indian student
organization on campus, her first exposure to an ethnic student organization on campus.

Findings

The findings based on the data are organized into three general themes: pre-college experiences and socialization, community and engagement, and support and personal development. The three themes illustrate the multiple narratives of the participants prior to and during their time at the institution. Each theme will be illustrated with direct quotes from the participants’ data. The themes emerged from the narratives are based on common phrases and experiences from all participants. I utilized the techniques of data analysis based on Jones et al. (2013) of open and initial coding, and axial and focused coding. Each process allowed me to focus specifically on the dominant themes and commonalities from all the participants in relation to the study as a whole. This allows me to connect each theme and the narratives to the larger research question and sub-questions of the study.

AsianCrit was used as a theoretical perspective to examine the narratives and understand the participants’ experiences as Asian American students at a predominantly White institution (Buenavista et al., 2009). AsianCrit is a framework as an extension of CRT used to understand the experience of race and racism by the lives and experiences of Asian Americans in the Western society (Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). AsianCrit specifically focuses on the Asian American population in illuminating the oppression, discrimination, and racism, and learning how to be advocates for all communities of color (Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013).
Theme 1: Pre-college experiences and socialization. A dominant theme of the participants was their pre-college experiences and socialization, pertaining to the external forces that have influenced their racial and ethnic identity prior to attending higher education. Many participants highlighted their families as the main influence for the knowledge of their culture, language, religion, and heritage. Kim (2001) and Museus (2014) highlight the significant influence family members have on an individual’s exposure of ethnic activities and environments, especially in AAID’s first stage of Ethnic Awareness. Language was a common theme that tied the participants to their ethnic identity. Angela reflected how her language influences her ethnic identity, “I would um consider myself Chinese, Vietnamese, and American, but I identify um with Vietnamese even though um technically I’m fourth Vietnamese um but that’s what I speak at home.” Even though Angela has multiple ethnic identities, she identifies as Vietnamese due to both of her parent’s influence on her socialization to identify as Vietnamese. Her parents’ decision to celebrate traditional Vietnamese events, activities, religion, and language brought on the act of socialization at a young age for Angela. She self-identifies her ethnicity to the Vietnamese language spoken at home and with her family. Baughb shared his reflection on the impact his family had on him to learn and retain his first language and culture:

I think [family is] like the strong point and they’re they’re the one that encourages like that passion for your culture, and growing up my mom would like yell at me for not speaking in uh Vietnamese…You go to school and you speak English and your friends speak English, and speaking Vietnamese was strictly a home thing.
While language is a commonality between all the participants in how they cultivate their ethnic identity with the influence of their family, religion and language intersected in several participants and their narratives. Abdullah highlighted his connection of his language and his religious affiliation:

Growing up in a predominantly American refugee, particularly Muslim community, um there’s always a sense of my ethnic identity especially just because I think I have a tie with my languages. I speak Arabic and I speak Malay… I grew up with a stronger sense of my of my religious background… I think that being around so many people who were Muslim, even though the culture isn’t Muslim… that was my initial uh way of identifying myself. That was how I saw myself and it’s still a big factor in how I see myself today.

**Stereotypes.** Socialization does not occur only in family dynamics. All participants voiced their experiences of being discriminated again by their peers based on their race. Asian Americans are often stereotyped as the model minority, being perceived as academic achievers, and often feel extra burden for the need to assimilate to societal norms (Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama et al., 2001, 2002; Wong & Halgin, 2006). In reference to AsianCrit’s first tenet of Asianization, the dominant society has the power to categorize the entire Asian American community under one monolithic racial group, discounting the variety and diversity of cultures within the population (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Stereotyping reinforces this racism and continues to perpetuate the permission to discriminate against oppressed groups in the United States (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). In order to dismantle the stereotypes of Asian Americans can be used as a positive reinforcement of acknowledging and valuing the individual narratives and experiences (Buenavista et al., 2009; Museus & Iftikar, 2013).
Ruby reflected on her experiences with peers who mocked her English proficiency based on her race, “oh your English is so good. Like did you, were you, weren’t you born in another country?...Oh you speak Vietnamese? That’s like really awesome. Wow your English is so good.” Instances like Ruby’s were common in multiple narratives of participants who reflected on their experiences when stereotyped as the model minority or mocked for their lack of or amazing competence of the English proficiency growing up. Their initial reaction and verbal communication about situations where they were negatively stereotyped indicated that they occurred frequently growing up as a racially marginalized individual in the United States.

Continuous negative stereotypes from peers of their Asian American identity conveyed resistance in identifying and being associated with that community. Participants described their experiences growing up when they resisted speaking their first language in public or felt ashamed when they brought their traditional cultural meals to school for lunch. These experiences created otherness from their White-identified peers throughout their K-12 education, and a sense of belonging to fit in with the dominant culture was more salient to them, relating directly to AAID’s White Identification stage of developing a strong sense of “otherness” within the education system (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). Often times these initial reactions and emotions are a result of biculturalism, identifying with two different cultures and in this case, Asian and American communities (Museus, 2014).

**Biculturalism.** Biculturalism can be a prominent identity for Asian American students as they navigate the Western society with an Asian perspective based on
their influence from family, institutions, and peers in terms of how they identify prior
to entering a university (Museus, 2014). As an Asian American, Baughb reflected on
his experience visiting family in Vietnam and struggling with his bicultural identity:

So I went back [to Vietnam]. I go back a lot because my mom’s side is on that
side so like over here you grew up and yeah you’re Asian. But over there, they
tell you that you’re American. It’s like where do I belong? (laughs). Yeah I
look like you like maybe I don’t speak as well. No but I speak fluent
Vietnamese but they’re still like you know, “You’re American. You can’t be
us.” It’s different.

This portrays that it not only is an issue living in the United States but it is an
international issue as well. Asian American students are portrayed as minorities and
as people of color in the United States, and are also marginalized in their countries of
origin for being American or Americanized. Tara reflected on her notion of
biculturalism and what she learned from those experiences:

I’ve been stereotyped before and then you just kind of feel like I’m not really
into, I’m not really Indian and I’m not really American so what am I?...I feel
like it’s important for me to explore what Indian American really is what how
that benefits me and what hindrances I do encounter with that.

Tara created a learning opportunity for herself to learn about her identities instead of
focusing solely on the negative narratives from others. This opportunity is key in
developing a racial identity and directly connects to Kim’s (2001) AAID of
individuals creating meaning of their own identity development through experiences
and adapting to new circumstances and environments. Having opportunities to learn
and grow from these negative experiences can create a stronger sense of self and
identity for Asian American students.

The narratives of Abdullah, Tara, Baughb, Angela, and Ruby illustrated how
impactful external influences can be to one’s identity development. Their narratives
indicated external factors such as family, peers, and society define how they chose to self-identify their race and ethnicity based on their experiences and the environments in which they were raised into prior to entering a university setting. Stereotypes play a large role in determining how Western society portrays Asian Americans (Wong & Halgin, 2006). Asian Americans have to live through the consequences of dealing with the generalization of negative narratives while trying to comprehend their interpretations of their identities as well. External influences and socialization prior to attending a higher education institution strongly affect ways individuals identify themselves based on their environment, and can be a determining factor in how they choose to engage or disengage with their ethnic or racial communities when entering a university.

**Theme 2: Community and Engagement.** The participants discussed their time and experiences at Corley University that contributed to their knowledge of their racial identity, and their involvement with the Asian cultural center and various ethnic student organizations. Initially, participants reflected on their transition to the university. Angela, for example, had a seamless transition and more knowledge of student organizations due to her older sister’s involvement on campus, while other participants were self-motivated within their first year to find communities in student organizations that would provide a sense of belonging at a large institution. Tara got involved with the Indian student organization during her first term. She had past experiences with traditional Indian dance growing up and this aspect intrigued her about the organization:

I got [involved] because of [dance] and that’s kind of how I began to make more friends and connections and um I just felt like a lot more included I
guess… I started to feel a lot more comfortable and included and like I felt that I found my niche of people.

By being involved with one student organization, Tara was more cognizant of other student organizations the university had to offer: “I think [being a part of (the Indian student organization)] helped me realize that there’s so many different ethnic um you know organizations on campus.” Being exposed to one cultural organization on campus provides students the opportunity to explore the multitude of resources that are designed and focused towards the success and development of students of color. Through multiple participants’ involvement with ethnic student organizations, they were able to work directly in or indirectly with the Asian cultural center on campus.

Corley University has cultural centers that represent four racial groups at their institution. The department that oversees all cultural centers highlights in their mission statement that they promote and provide educational opportunities for all students to learn about various cultures and their impact to society. Although there are specific racial cultural centers, all of the cultural centers intentionally state that they are open and accessible to all individuals regardless if they identify with the community of the cultural center. This intentionality is also shown through the institutional policy of the enactment of the Cultural Centers Covenant. This covenant demonstrates an institutional commitment of diversity as the core of their educational mission, and the role of the cultural centers as an essential component to the learning environment at Corley University. In order to promote and provide educational opportunities to educate the campus community, individuals need to recognize the social construction of race and the implications of oppression for racially marginalized groups (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). The fourth tenet of AsianCrit,
Strategic (Anti)Essentialism can be utilized within trainings and practice to advocate for the Asian American community in promoting cultural diversity and recognizing the differences in culture within the population (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

Cultural centers can provide students the opportunity to explore their race or ethnicity, or to learn about various cultures and histories of communities of people (Patton & Hannon, 2008). All the participants stated how the Asian cultural center and all cultural centers have impacted not only their involvement at the university but have developed their own understanding and awareness of their Asian American identity. Sean reflected on his perspective of why cultural centers are critical to one’s college experience:

I feel like these centers are a necessity everywhere because there are some issues around racial groups and ethnic groups that happen within the U.S. and within the world, and without getting recognition of acknowledgment from the university that it would be like a job as a resource center to tell campus, to tell the rest of the campus, what’s going on in the world.

Cultural centers provide opportunities to help individuals to cultivate and develop their racial identity, provide educational opportunities for the larger institutional population, a space for conversations on racial issues in society, and a space for individuals with similar backgrounds and identities (Akbar, 1993; Liu et al., 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008). It is crucial for student affairs professionals to be cognizant of global issues that pertain to students and the identities they hold so that we can support them holistically during their time at the institution (Kawaguchi, 2003; Museus, 2014). In order to promote cultural diversity at an institution, individuals need a foundational knowledge of the importance of understanding and learning the cultural differences of ethnic groups to fully support students and in turn, increase
the likelihood that students will continue to retain and have the sense of respect and trust with professionals (Kawaguchi, 2003; Museus, 2014; Museus & Truong, 2009).

As research shows, Asian American students from predominantly White communities or institutions internalize their race and face implications of racism in their external environments (Kim, 2001; Neville et al., 2006; Young & Takeuchi, 1998). It is important to offer a space for Asian American students to be in community with peers and professionals who share similar experiences in order to grow in their racial understanding and identity development. All participants reflected how the Asian cultural center supported in cultivating their racial identity. Many included acknowledging their ethnic heritage and culture as part of their identity, while others spoke about the inclusive environment and how the cultural center can be utilized as a resource to get involved with ethnic student organizations in order to develop personally. Sean reflected on the impact of the Asian cultural center in his identity development:

I started making more and more connections with my race… I noticed a lot of racial things because of like my background of living in predominantly White neighborhoods and I wanted to explore and see how and make connections with my race as well… I learned a lot about the various countries and I learn more, I learned about the Pacific Islands than I would have ever had known just from not working [at the Asian cultural center].

Sean’s reflection highlights the positive influence an Asian cultural center can provide for Asian American students in understanding how their experiences can influence their self-identification, and provide the opportunity to learn about various cultures and countries within the Asian communities (Liu et al., 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008). The Asian cultural center provides space for individuals who grew up in predominantly White communities to communicate with peers who had similar
community upbringings and share common experiences (Liu et al., 2010). Angela also spoke about the positive impact of having an Asian cultural center on a predominantly White campus and educating the campus community:

(Asian cultural center) is there for students to learn about their own culture or learn about cultures within the [Asian] um ethnic groups…I think it’s really important to like have [an Asian cultural center] because you know being at a predominantly White institution, I feel like a lot of people um who are not like familiar, don’t know much. Especially like if they’re coming from like other like small towns where they have never been exposed to maybe a person who identifies as Asian.

As a small, marginalized population on campus, Asian American students at Corley saw the Asian cultural center as a personal resource to educate themselves about their ethnic background, and a chance for the campus community to learn about the diversity within the Asian population.

Throughout the interview, all participants reflected on the positive environment the Asian cultural center provided for them and their peers. Many stated it as an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment that provided a place of community and connection with fellow Asian American individuals. Abdullah, who works at the center, highlighted his experience at the Asian cultural center as an inclusive space for all:

I mean I purposely sought out the (Asian cultural center) and I wanted to be surrounded by [Asian American individuals] so I could develop a sense of myself as Asian American…I think [students] see the (Asian cultural center) as a safe space…like I think it’s just as important for students, that the student think of us as as a resource and as a safe space as it is for us to provide one…(Asian cultural center) is that neutral ground no matter what club, ethnicity, whatever. You can come into the (Asian cultural center), be here, and be welcomed, and I think that’s what makes a safe space.

Abdullah described multiple points of impact the Asian cultural center provided for him and others. As an inclusive, welcoming space for all, he was able to be a part of a
community that promoted the diversity of cultures while exploring his identity as an Asian American. It is critical that Asian American students are given opportunities to connect, interact, and develop their sense of self and their identity in a space that is opportune for Asian-identified individuals and be offered resources that can support their development process (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). An opportunity like an Asian American social potluck can provide students to connect with their peers and professionals who also identify as Asian Americans and share their experiences, while also learning about other cultures and their history through food, which is a large portion of the Asian culture and community.

Abdullah, Angela, Sean, and Tara’s experiences, in relation to the second theme, at the university as Asian American students and their involvement with the Asian cultural center pose concepts of community building and an inclusive environment on a campus where they are a marginalized student population. An Asian cultural center engages individuals to understand, be aware, and explore their racial and ethnic history, and to educate others about the diverse communities of the Asian population.

**Theme 3: Support and Growth.** The final theme in the interviews reflected the amount of support participants received from peers, partners, professionals, and faculty at the institution as well as an increased personal development and growth of the student’s racial identity because of their involvement in the Asian cultural center. As a marginalized population at a predominantly White campus, the participants stated support from administrators and faculty as one of their largest influences in developing their identity and personal and academic success as students. Tara
reflected on her experience with a faculty member who has supported her during her time at the institution:

> Well my professors in like my classes, they’ve supported me a lot…and I find it interesting because one of my professors, she is Indian and then her husband is not, and they’ve both really helped me out. And and I don’t know if it’s because she’s Indian and I’ve related with her more, but they’ve guided me a lot through this process and um um you know like showed me like these are the opportunities that you can do.

Tara’s experience shows that students who can identity racially or ethnically with their faculty members can develop a relationship of support and mentorship. Many of the participants spoke about their relationships with professionals of color, specifically Asian-identified professionals, who work directly at the Asian cultural center or departments that support the center. Abdullah articulated his experience with the professional staff in the center:

> Oh I’m so glad that we got Mark¹…I mean he’s been doing this for a long time so I think he knows he knows what it’s like to work with um Asian students. He knows what it’s like to work with students of color. He knows he knows his stuff so he’s been really great, and I mean he’s, I think he’s taken a lead in sort of this year um in bringing us professional and personal development into our staff meetings so the whole staff can benefit from his experience and his knowledge.

Sean also spoke about his experience with a student affairs professional who worked directly with the cultural centers on campus:

> Helen² was a really, she was like one of the biggest supporters for all the (cultural centers). She stops by every once in a while, she gets to know everybody there. You know she also is like, talks to us little or a lot about racial identity.

Each of the participants identified at least one professional of color and a couple White-identified professionals who have supported them during their entire journey at

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¹ Mark is a pseudonym.
² Helen is a pseudonym.
Corley University. Being able to experience this type of support from professionals who invest in the academic success, personal development and growth, and provide a personal connection and relationship seemed to be valuable components for each participant. Other participants reflected on specific moments when a student affairs professional talked to them directly about racial identity or learned more about their ethnicity through student organizations and campus events. Professionals are crucial in this development phase for college students because they become a resource for all matters including school, personal, and social. Recognizing social justice advocates, such as professionals and faculty at the institution can be valuable in practicing positive transformations in how the university engages in conversations of race, racism, and racially marginalized communities (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Reinforcing and practicing CRT and AsianCrit’s *Commitment to Social Justice* within the campus community can provide an awareness and useful understanding of the experiences of Asian American students at the institution (Museus & Iftikar, 2013).

Towards the end of each interview, I asked all participants why they would continue to invest in the cultivation of their racial identity development. There were many different responses of their personal exploration process but the majority of participants agreed that it would not only benefit their self-awareness of their identities but they would develop a sense of pride of who they are. Ruby highlighted her determination to learn about her own culture in order to navigate in our society:

I wouldn’t be more proud of my culture than today because of how much I’ve pushed myself to figure out what my culture is and how it affects the way that I’m treated in society you know.

Tara also spoke about the importance of accepting your identities:
I think it’s always important to understand where you come from no matter what you identity is how you identify with you know as yourself. But it’s really important to realize where you came from and what that means and what you what the culture is and just kind of be aware of that… and when somebody asks [about your culture], you can actually talk about it instead of ignoring it and being ashamed of it… I just feel like it’s important to know where you come from and not be ashamed of it but embrace it.

Tara and Ruby’s personal cultivation of their racial and ethnic identity illustrate the positive and impactful reflection they have developed and want to continue their cultural understanding and learn to navigate through society based on their identities. Tara continued on to discuss how her Indian American identity influences herself and those who also identify as Indian, and also the benefits and hindrances she encounters by identifying as bicultural. Finally, Angela mentions her perspective of how the community in the Asian cultural center directly influenced her identity development:

I always feel like but when an individual like tries to seek their identity whether racially or not, it’s just to find who they are. I think that it’s most important that they feel welcome [at the Asian cultural center] and it gives them that sense of thriving within their community.

Angela’s reflection offers a perspective of her experience in developing her racial and ethnic identity and the support she was given by a physical space on campus dedicated to the support of Asian American students.

Abdullah, Angela, Tara, Ruby, and Sean’s reflections highlight the positive effects of support, and personal growth and development that faculty, professionals, and the Asian cultural center can provide for Asian American students. Abdullah and Sean shared the support they received from their supervisors and mentors in the Asian cultural center and the professional development opportunities they were given to develop their identities. Tara, Angela, and Ruby discussed the saliency and importance of their racial identity as they navigate the world and society as Asian
American students, and being aware of the importance of accepting your cultural background.

The collection of narratives of the students in this section provide the opportunity for professionals to see the significance of providing programs and spaces for students to be in community with other Asian American individuals in order to share experiences, develop together, and build an inclusive community.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the research data on the experiences of six Asian American students at a predominantly White institution. Chapter four presented three major themes which emerged from the data: pre-college experiences and socialization, community and engagement, and support and growth. All three themes illuminate the participants’ experiences before and during their time at the institution, and the influence of the Asian cultural center in the cultivation of their racial and ethnic identity. The AAID, CRT, and AsianCrit were utilized as theoretical perspectives in analyzing the narratives of the participants, and recognizing ways to support and advocate for the Asian American community.

Abdullah, Angela, Ruby, Sean, Baughb, and Tara had similar but varying degrees of experiences in ways they developed their racial identity. Their narratives provide the opportunities and challenges Asian Americans face when enrolling at a predominantly White institution, and illustrate the major factors that contribute to their overall success as students and individuals of society. The following chapter will provide a discussion of the findings, recommendations to student affairs professionals, the conclusion, and the limitations of this study.
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the cultivation of racial identity development of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution. The main research question that guided this study was: In what ways are Asian American students supported by Asian cultural centers in their racial identity development at predominantly White institutions? This is crucial for institutions to comprehend because it illuminates how cultural backgrounds, upbringings, and external influences factor in the racial identity development process for individuals (Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

The researcher used a narrative inquiry methodology to gain an understanding of the participants’ experiences as Asian American students prior to and during their time at the institution. The theoretical perspectives utilized in this study include the Asian American Identity Development Model (AAID), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Asian Critical Theory (AsianCrit) in order to explore the meaning making process of the students and their narratives as Asian American students in the United States (Buenvista et al., 2009; Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). AsianCrit was used a framework through the data analysis process to connect the experiences of the participants to the seven tenets of the theory. These seven tenets include: Asianization; Transnational Context; (Re)Constructive History; Strategic (Anti)Essentialism; Intersectionality; Story, Theory, and Praxis; and Commitment to Social Justice (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). AsianCrit is expanded based on the original CRT, though it specifies to support and understand the experiences of Asian American students. By acknowledging the importance of race and ethnicity using the
AsianCrit framework, student affairs professionals can start to work theory into practice at the institution. Often the Asian American community are grouped into one racial group, which fails to recognize the multitude of various cultures and ethnicities within the population (Buenavista et al., 2009; Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). By incorporating the framework of AsianCrit into the programs and services that promote the cultivation of racial identity for Asian Americans, all individuals can be educated and be aware of the diversity within the Asian American community, and learn to challenge the dominant narratives of Asian Americans.

The first chapter introduced the topic and definition of terms of the study. The second chapter highlighted the literature and research that existed based on the topic. The literature review highlighted several sections including stereotypes, color-blind racism, theoretical perspectives, multicultural affairs, and cultural centers. The incorporation of CRT, AsianCrit, and AAID were highlighted in chapter two to understand the experiences of Asian American students. The third chapter discussed the methodological approach in conducting the research with the use of a narrative inquiry approach. The fourth chapter analyzed the findings of the study and presented the analysis and the three general themes that emerged from the data. The theoretical perspectives of AAID, CRT, and AsianCrit were used to analyze the emerged data in the process. The fifth and final chapter will present a discussion of the results of the participants’ experiences, implications and recommendations for student affairs professionals, and concluding thoughts of this study.
Discussion

The Asian American students in this study shared their pre-college experiences and their experiences at Corley University, a large, predominantly White institution. The six participants: Abdullah, Angela, Ruby, Baughb, Tara, and Sean, spoke about their experiences as Asian American students in a White society growing up and having to assimilate to the American culture, and learning to develop their ethnic and racial identity with support of the higher education institution and its resources, such as the Asian cultural center.

The participants shared their experiences with the researcher during the interviews, and were able to reflect how their experiences have impacted their racial identity and their intersecting identities as well. This reflection process allowed the participants to recognize the strong influence from society to assimilate to the Western culture while staying true to their ethnicity and heritage, and how they have learned to navigate society as part of a racially marginalized community. In the process of interviewing the participants, the students mentioned that the cultural center provided a welcoming space for the students to feel they could be honest in sharing their experiences with fellow peers to reflect on their experiences prior to and during their time at the institution as Asian American students. The individual interviews provided findings that spoke to the trends of Asian American students in the United States as mentioned in the literature review. These trends mentioned in the narratives include stereotypes, cultural assimilation, pressure to achieve academically, and strong familial influences in many aspects of their life. The narratives continued to validate the research conducted thus far on Asian American students in higher
education. The three themes that emerged from the data will be analyzed and explained further in the following subsections.

**Pre-college experiences and socialization.** Many of the participants mentioned a strong familial influence in their racial identity development in relation to their first language, culture, religion, and heritage. As referenced from Kim’s (2001) AAID, Asian Americans are exposed to their ethnic and racial identity primarily through family and peers beginning in the adolescent phase (Museus, 2014). As students enter the K-12 school system, their peers and society become a stronger influence on their identity development based on the stereotypes and negative narratives from the dominant society and culture (Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014).

Most participants stated their experience hearing stereotypes and experiencing microaggressions from their White-identified peers, which resulted in the resistance to identifying as Asian American or associating with their heritage and culture. This form of resistance can be associated with the power of the dominant society to categorize the community into one racial group and continuing to reinforce stereotypes and racial discrimination. AsianCrit’s first tenet, *Asianization*, highlights this form of categorization, and the society generalizing the Asian American community into one group (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). This form of homogeneity creates an exclusion of valuing differences in culture and identities. Even before the participants entered higher education, they questioned their Asian American identity due to adapting to the Western culture but identifying as Asian, and asking questions like, “Where do I belong?” or “Who am I?” This sense of biculturalism was salient
for a couple participants, and can be a difficult process for participants to understand as they continue to navigate in the United States.

**Community and engagement.** In terms of the participants’ involvement at the institution, many if not all stated the Asian cultural center and various ethnic student organizations as having a large influence in their connection to their fellow Asian American peers and professionals. The sense of community building was common in the responses to their experiences at the institution and their involvement thus far as students (Schlossberg, 1989). All participants mentioned the Asian cultural center or student organizations as their first form of involvement at the institution, while many have continued in the same organizations since their first-year. Cultural centers provide the opportunity for all individuals at the institution to learn about the diversity of cultures of multiple races, to educate the community about the importance of understanding the larger issues of race in our society, and to connect with individuals with similar identities (Akbar, 1993; Liu et al., 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008).

By educating and advocating for Asian American students, the frameworks of AsianCrit, *Re(Constructive) History* and *Strategic (Anti)Essentialism*, can be utilized in developing the lens in which programs and services are developed at the institution in reconstructing the incorporation of Asian American history and culture. The students’ experiences about the impact of the cultural center on their identity development through professional development, peer conversations, and educational opportunities, supported the need to continue to advocate for resources and programs that are crucial for students to develop their racial identity during their time at the
institutions. Campus resources, such as the Asian cultural center and student organizations, are critical to the development of students to learn about their multiple identities and to engage in conversations and spaces where they are challenged and supported by peers and professionals.

**Support and growth.** The support for Asian American students and their personal development growth were critical in the participants’ narratives based on their experiences at Corley University. Many of the participants stated professionals at the institution, both White-identified and professionals of color, whom contributed to the students’ involvement on campus, and their professional and personal development opportunities to engage in conversations of race, ethnicity, and racism. This form of support from professionals and departments demonstrates that the institution is committed to diversity, student engagement and involvement, and developing their whole selves including their social identities. Many participants mentioned Asian-identified professionals, especially those who worked closely with the cultural centers or the Asian cultural center on campus, that assisted in the students’ personal development of their racial identity and their continued engagement with student organizations and the Asian cultural center. As stated before, it is critical for Asian American students to see and interact with Asian American professionals for support in terms of sharing experiences, knowledge, research, and an understanding to relate based on their background from a similar community (Kim, 2001; Liu et al., 2010; Museus, 2014).

The participants stated their wish to continue to cultivate their racial identity development for the rest of their time at the institution and after they graduate. It is
important for individuals to be self-aware and reflect on the significance of developing their racial identity in order to understand the history of the community and to educate others of the Asian American population (Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Kim, 2001; Museus, 2014). When individuals utilize the framework of the final tenet of AsianCrit in their everyday interactions, they become social justice advocates to not only the Asian American community but for all communities of color to recognize and eliminate racism and oppression (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). The physical space of an Asian cultural center on campus, especially on predominantly White institutions, can support Asian American students and all individuals in developing multicultural competency, and provide support and resources for students to analyze and reflect on their self-identification (Hune, 2002; Young, 1991). Asian American students have specific ethnic needs and concerns and an Asian cultural center can establish a physical space that is welcoming, inclusive, and open for students to interact and address the issues they face as a marginalized population (Schlossberg, 1989). The Asian cultural center can allow for personal and institutional growth and development as the campus builds as a community to provide a sense of belonging for Asian American students on a predominantly White campus.

**Implications**

The field of student affairs is dedicated to working with students to develop their personal identity and contribute to society. This study will contribute to the broader research and knowledge of Asian American students to the field. I hope this research will influence and engage student affairs professionals to better understand and learn the specific needs and concerns of Asian American students at predominantly White institutions to assist in the cultivation of the students’ racial
identity development. After presenting the analysis of the three themes presented based on the narratives of the six participants in the study, I present two implications for student affairs professionals to understand the experiences of Asian American students and support them through their time at the institution. These implications suggest that the support for Asian American students at predominantly White institutions is crucial for the development of their identities.

The first implication is for student affairs professionals to be mindful of how Asian American students choose to identify with their racial identity. Often times, not all students who enter a higher education setting are aware of their racial identity or choose to identify with the identity. Due to psychosocial dominance, the need to assimilate and conform to the Western society, this influence causes Asian Americans to internalize their own race, and poses a difficult role in their self-identification (Kodama et al., 2002). In addition to internalized racism, Asian American students face many stereotypes, such as being categorized as model minorities and honorary “Whites”, usually labeled by their White-identified peers (Alvarez, 2002; Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Kodama et al., 2002). Through these difficult experiences, it can be challenging for Asian American students to want to explore their racial identity when they had been mocked growing up in the United States. These experiences can influence how they choose their identity and associate with the Asian American community in positive or negative ways. However, all of the participants in the study self-identified as Asian Americans and were able to reflect on their experiences growing up that contributed to their self-identification process.
The second implication is to provide resources for Asian American students that are designed to support them holistically at the institution, including their personal development and growth. Since Asian Americans are categorized as model minorities, institutions neglect to support students academically because literature suggests that all Asian Americans are supposed to achieve academically in comparison to other racial groups (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Wong & Halgin, 2006). However, it is important for student affairs professionals to support them in order to advocate for students of color and help them overcome societal obstacles that are associated to the community. As a small marginalized population, resources that encourage Asian American students to explore and develop not only their racial identity but all their intersecting identities allows for the opportunity to learn about their own culture and the cultures of others (Hune, 2002; Liu et al., 2010; Young, 1991). These resources will support a stronger racial identity and will help them navigate a White campus and the dominant society. All the participants stated that resources specific for Asian American students assisted in the cultivation of their racial identity and their awareness of the diverse cultures within the Asian American community.

**Recommendations**

This study examined the experiences of Asian American students in the cultivation of their racial identity development. Examining the narratives using narrative inquiry highlighted their individual experiences and developed practical implications. In order to support Asian American students in their racial identity development, I present five recommendations for student affairs professionals:
increase Asian American student enrollment and recruitment, increase professionals of color representation, develop Asian American academic courses, incorporate social justice learning in student staff development, and challenge Asian American stereotypes on campus. These recommendations will be explained further in the following subsections.

**Increase Asian American student enrollment and recruitment.** Nationwide, many institutions are implementing strategic goals and plans to increase diversity at predominantly White institutions. Asian American students at predominantly White institutions are still recognized as the minority group within the larger student population. While the Asian American student population is continuously increasing in the United States, there is still a need to push for not only Asian American students but also for students of color. If the institution at question has embedded the word or concept of diversity into their mission statement, principles, or values, it is crucial for the institution to follow through on their plans and visions for the future of their student population.

The first way to increase Asian American student enrollment and recruitment is to identify the recruitment efforts of the admissions department. What efforts are being made by admissions to increase diversity with the incoming first-year class? Does the admissions department abide by the laws of affirmative action in college admissions or does race play a factor in the students they are admitting into the institution? Considering that admissions has a large influence in continuously developing and admitting students that can define an institution’s campus culture, acknowledging these questions in efforts to increase diversity is crucial to address. In
addition, making sure that recruitment efforts are aligning with the institution’s strategic goals of increase diversity provides a foundation of future goals and visions of enhancing and fostering the student of color population.

Secondly, I believe high school recruitment is also important in terms of visibility of universities, and the possibility to make college more of a reality for many communities. In one of the participant interviews, Angela spoke about a professional of color at Corley University that came to recruit at her high school and spoke to Angela about the Asian American student organization she could be involved in, and how that professional would be there to support her throughout her college career. That experience was factor in Angela’s decision to attend the Corley and ultimately she became very involved with the Asian American student organizations on campus. Working with admissions, attending college fairs, and speaking with Asian American students directly about community building, support, and resources the university can provide for Asian American students can be a deciding factor to attend an institution.

**Increase professionals of color representation.** As mentioned in the findings from the participants, professionals at Corley University provided great support, guidance, mentorship, and professional development for Asian American students pertaining to their academic success, personal success, well-being, and personal development and growth. For students, having professionals of color to turn to in an environment where they are not that many people that identify as people of color can be very impactful in terms of navigating the campus culture and the institution. Professionals of color can relate to the racial discriminations, oppressions, and
experiences of their own lives to Asian American students. Sharing common experiences provide a safe space for students to seek guidance from professionals when there are issues or concerns in their lives and have someone who will understand what the students are going through.

In order to increase the representations of professionals of color, the hiring process in alignment with human resources must coincide with the institutional efforts of increasing diversity in their entire university population, including faculty and staff. Therefore when hiring, it is important for the search committee and all parties involved to review the anti-discriminatory policy for all identities while acknowledging the need to make sure the professionals of color percentage is aligns with the student of color percentage and population. When students of color see more professional with similar identities as them, they feel more inclined to talk to them about their overall success and engagement, while also seeking for mentorship throughout their time at the institution.

**Develop Asian American academic courses.** This recommendation to develop Asian American academic courses for students at a predominantly White institution was mentioned multiple times in the participant interviews. The participants saw a lack of Asian or Asian American related courses in their undergraduate career. The participants mentioned that these courses could have been useful to identify and develop their racial identity as Asian American individuals in the United States.
Many institutions may have a department of international studies, ethnic studies, or culturally based majors such as Chicano/Chicana studies or African American studies. However, for institutions that do not have specific culturally or ethnically based majors on campus, establishing an Asian American course can be beneficial for the percentage of students on campus that identify with that race. With this academic course, I envision the following learning outcomes:

First, the course will address the importance of disaggregating the Asian American population. As mentioned in my introduction, it is crucial to differentiate the Asian American population and the Pacific Islander population because they regions have differing historical contexts, culture, and policies. Many of the Pacific Islander students may have differing cultural issues and concerns from Asian American students and it is important not to perpetuate the generalization of the entire Asian population. Within Asia, there are over 50 countries with varying cultures, religions, languages, customs, and history. This course would provide an overview of the similarities as well as the differentiating aspects of ethnic groups.

Second, the course will provide the historical context of Asian immigration to the United States. It is important not only to talk about how immigration of people of color have influenced higher education and the support for Asian American and immigrant students, but it is also crucial to understand the broad concept of immigration within the United States and how that influences economy, policies, and politics.
Lastly, the course will review and educate students on racial identity development theories, specifically with the incorporation of Asian American identity development theory, Critical Race Theory, and Asian Critical Theory. As Asian American students, learning about how race, racism, and discrimination influences navigating society as a person of color, and learning about your own development stage in terms of your racial identity in important to reflect on past experiences or events that factored into the way students identify with their racial identity. Students will be able to reflect on their experiences utilizing the frameworks of the racial identity development theories, and recognize if they will decide to continue to enhance their racial identity development during their time in college.

**Incorporate social justice education in student staff development.** Student staff and student leaders on college campus are vital role models to the larger student population in terms of their work ethic, reputation, relationship with departments, peers, and professionals, and their level of campus and community engagement and involvement. Within student staff trainings and meeting, incorporating social justice into curriculum or agenda can provide the opportunity for students to be aware and cognizant of social justice issues during their college career. At a predominantly White institution, students are enclosed in the “university bubble” in which they may not be as exposed to many cultural differences, discrimination, or social justice issues, as they would be if they were working in a full-time position in a diverse location.

By being intentional of developing students to be responsible citizens of society, including being culturally competent in their future careers, it is the responsibility of the institution to instill goals and plans that incorporate this
education in a co-curricular fashion. Within these meetings and training, discussing personal and social identities and student development theories pertaining to their work as student leaders or staff, and incorporating community dialogue opportunity to engage in conversation with peers and professionals in order to learn from one another can be a valuable opportunity for many individuals. Whether the students are beginning to identify with their racial identity or they are hoping to engage more critically, providing the space and time to educate students can prove to be valuable and useful as they navigate society or interactions with people in the future.

**Challenge Asian American stereotypes on campus.** The final recommendation for student affairs professionals and primarily the Asian cultural centers at predominantly White institutions is to challenge Asian American stereotypes on campus. Due to the model minority and other stereotypes that depict the Asian American population in a negative light based on media and societal influences, this is an opportunity for the Asian cultural center on campus to host educational and interactive sessions for all individuals to not essentialize the Asian American community. Based on Critical Race Theory’s *Strategic (Anti)Essentialism*, Asian cultural centers can provide the essential tools, resources, and possibilities to discourage seeing the Asian American community as a monolithic group and as model minorities, but rather learning, embracing, and acknowledging the vast differences in culture, history, language, customs, and values.

While it is important for the Asian cultural center to educate the larger campus community of the varied differences, it is essential to acknowledge that the center themselves are embracing the varied ethnic groups of the students they serve as well.
While the goal of cultural centers is to engage and to educate the larger population of the racial community, this cannot be done without the internal inspiration, impact, and support of the Asian cultural center from within including the professionals and student staff. In order to challenge the stereotypes of Asian Americans on campus, there must be a drive, focus, and dedication from individuals to combat oppression and discrimination when heard in conversations or interactions with peers. The center can focus on ways students can explore and build together to develop a supportive and encouraging environment where they can have discussions on addressing and confronting issues of racial discrimination on campus. This can also be an opportunity for the center to collaborate with various departments on campus to address similar issues at hand of challenging stereotypes of oppressed groups.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of Asian American students are crucial to understand in order to analyze the ways in which they initially developed and cultivated their racial identity in the United States. Asian American student populations are increasing nationwide in higher education institutions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The support to understand and to educate others on the diverse cultures, languages, religions, and heritage within the Asian American community is important in order to be in solidarity with the Asian American students (Hune, 2002; Kawaguchi, 2003; Kodama et al., 2001; Museus, 2014). Learning about the diverse groups within the Asian American community shows that not all Asian Americans are generalizable as a population based on stereotypes or negative narratives but rather each individual
provides unique perspectives to the campus community (Kawaguchi, 2003; Liu et al., 2010; Museus, 2014; Wong & Halgin, 2006).

The experiences of Abdullah, Angela, Ruby, Sean, Baughb, and Tara spoke to the importance of an Asian American support system through the Asian cultural center, ethnic student organizations, and professionals of color in cultivating their racial identity development at the institution. Due to the importance of these experiences, student affairs professionals can learn from these narratives and the impact of such services and professionals that have directly influenced the students’ connection to the institution. The information presented in this study can be utilized to understand and develop services that provide Asian American students the opportunity to explore, reflect, and process past and present experiences and to continue to develop their racial identity. The future implications for student affairs professionals were as follows: diversity workshops, visibility of Asian cultural center, and institutional commitment.

In conclusion, predominantly White institutions need to provide a physical space for students to learn about their own race and ethnicity while interacting with peers and professionals with similar identities to cultivate their racial identity. This is important during their college experience due to the freedom to pursue their purpose and their personal values of defining who they are. The narratives in this study depict the experiences of Asian American students at a predominantly White institution who have analyzed and reflected on their experiences and the support of the cultivation of their racial identity prior to and during their time at the institution.
References


Lather, P. (2003). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. In Y. S. Lincoln & N. K. Denzin (Eds.), *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 185–215). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice (pp. 26–45). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Cultivating Racial Identity Development within Asian Cultural Centers

Dear Student:

My name is Esther Kim and I am a graduate student in the College Student Services Administration program in the College of Education. The purpose of my research is to understand and identify the emerging themes of Asian American students’ experiences of racial identity development being cultivated by Asian cultural centers.

Participants in this study will be asked to have an individual interview with the student researcher (Esther Kim) for no longer than two hours. The individual interviews will be audio-recorded.

The results of this study will be used to write a thesis for a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in College Student Services Administration at Oregon State University.

Qualifications to participate in this study:

1. Must be currently enrolled full-time at Oregon State University.
2. Must be a domestic student at Oregon State University.
3. Must identify at least as a first-generation Asian American.
4. Must be an active participant in the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center for more than one year.

If you meet the qualifications for participating in this study, and wish to do so, please email me at esther.kim@oregonstate.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of this request.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email me.

Sincerely,

Esther Kim
Graduate Assistant, Dean of Student Life Central
Office of the Dean of Student Life
Oregon State University
Appendix B: Explanation of Research (Consent Form)

Project Title: Cultivating Racial Identity Development within Asian Cultural Centers
Principal Investigator: Daniel Newhart
Student Researcher: Esther Kim
Co-Investigator(s): None
Sponsor: None
Version Date: 06112014

Purpose: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to examine the exploration of racial identity development within Asian cultural centers at predominantly White institutions through programs, services, interactions, and involvement of the student. This qualitative research is framed through a narrative inquiry methodology to illuminate and understand the lived experiences of Asian American students. Individual interviews will be conducted to explore and examine personal experiences of the students while allowing the students to include their personal perspectives. The research will be analyzed through the interpretations of the student researcher.

The study is being conducted by the student researcher for the completion of a Master’s thesis in College Student Services Administration.

Activities: The study activities include personal, individual interviews with the participant and the student researcher. The student researcher will also be taking observation notes throughout the interview.

Time: Your participation in this study will last about two hours.

Risks: The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the being in the study include:
Since you are a student at Oregon State University, there is a risk that you could be identified based upon your interview responses. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms will be used during the study.

Please choose a pseudonym for the records of this study: _______________________

Potential risk, though minimal, may include emotional reactions with regard to reflecting upon your personal experiences and perspectives on racial identity and the development process. If you feel emotional during the process, I can connect you with references at Counseling and Psychological Services.

The researcher is using email to communicate with you in this study. There is a risk that the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be
guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or contain viruses. To minimize these risks, the researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study. This study will not collect any private information via email. Email will only be used for scheduling individual interviews.

**Benefit:** This study is not designed to benefit you directly.

**Payment:** You will not be paid for being in this research study

**Confidentiality:** The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If the results of this project are published, I will not be connecting your identity to your responses. Only the student researcher and the principal investigator will be able to access the audio recordings. The recordings will only be used for educational purposes of this research and will be erased once the study has been completed.

**Voluntary:** Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports. Choosing not to participate in this study will not affect your ability to utilize resources in the cultural center.

While study participation is voluntary, all questions must be answered in order for your interview answers to be included in the study results.

**Study contacts:** If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Daniel Newhart at daniel.newhart@oregonstate.edu or Esther Kim at esther.kim@oregonstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.
Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
   Probe: Tell me about the neighborhood or community you grew up in.
   Probe: What is your racial identity? Do you identify with your race?
   Probe: What is your ethnicity? Do you identify with your ethnicity?

2. Please describe your transition to the university.
   Probe: Did you face any challenges with your racial identity in your transition?

3. When was the first time you discussed race or your racial identity?
   Probe: How were you feeling/what were your reactions to the conversation or experience?

4. How have your peers or family influenced your racial identity or your racial identity development?
   Probe: How have they supported you in any way to explore your racial identity? Examples?

5. How have you been involved with the Asian cultural center on campus? For how long?
   Probe: How has your involvement with the Asian cultural center influenced how you identify with your race or ethnicity? Please describe.
   Probe: Can you identify which programs or services personally supported in your cultivation of your racial identity?
   Probe: Have staff or peer leaders within the Asian cultural centers provided spaces for conversations or events centering around racial identity development?

6. What types of support have you received in your racial identity development at the institution?
   Probe: How have you been supported by departments or professionals in your development process?
   Probe: What experiences, programs, or services have supported you in your process?

7. Why do you think it is important for an individual to explore their racial identity?

8. Why do you think it’s important for the institution to support students explore and
develop their racial identity during their time in college?

9. Why do you wish you continue to explore your racial identity as part of your college experience?

10. What programs or services would you implement for students to feel supported and to explore their racial identity development?
Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Exemption Approval

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<td>Daniel Newhart</td>
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<td>Study Team Members</td>
<td>Esther Kim</td>
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The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

Expiration Date: 6/10/2019
The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.

Annual renewals will not be required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the Investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

Documents included in this review:
- [ ] Protocol
- [ ] Consent forms
- [ ] Assent forms
- [ ] Alternative consent
- [ ] Letters of support
- [ ] Recruiting tools
- [ ] Test instruments
- [ ] Attachment A: Radiation
- [ ] Alternative assent
- [ ] Project revision(s)
- [ ] External IRB approvals
- [ ] Translated documents
- [ ] Attachment B: Human materials
- [ ] Grant/contract
- [ ] Other:

Comments:

Principal Investigator responsibilities:
- Amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. Amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, personnel, target enrollment, study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc.
- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research.
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.
Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Research Protocol

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

June 11, 2014

1. Protocol Title: Cultivating Racial Identity Development within Asian Cultural Centers

PERSONNEL

2. Principal Investigation Dr. Daniel Newhart
3. Student Researcher(s) Esther Kim

4. Investigator Qualifications
   - Dr. Daniel Newhart is the Director of Student Affairs Research, Evaluation, and Planning and holds a PhD in Social and Cultural Foundations of Education from The Ohio State University. Dr. Newhart has published and presented numerous times on student affairs, and research and assessment in higher education.

5. Training and Oversight
   - Dr. Newhart and Ms. Kim will be meeting frequently to discuss research establish timelines and benchmarks, and make revisions in preparation for thesis defense. Ms. Kim will derive training and knowledge from coursework in research and assessment, assessment experience with various on-campus internships, and research within the Office of the Dean of Student Life.

FUNDING

6. Sources of Support for this project (unfunded, pending, or awarded)
   - Unfunded

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

7. Description of Research
   The purpose of this research study is to examine the exploration of racial identity development within Asian cultural centers at predominantly White institutions through programs, services, interactions, and involvement of the student. This qualitative research is framed through a narrative inquiry methodology to illuminate and understand the narratives of students and the emerging themes of Asian American students. Individual interviews will be conducted to explore and examine personal experiences of the students while allowing the students to include their personal perspectives. The research will be analyzed through the interpretations of the student researcher.

   The study is being conducted by the student researcher for the completion of a Master’s thesis in College Student Services Administration.

8. Background Justification
   Asian American students represent a significantly small number of student representations at predominantly White institutions, though it is one of the fastest growing racial group populations in higher education (Hune, 2002; Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2001). Many of the cultural centers in higher education are monoracial and can discount the variety of ethnic identities and culture within the larger Asian American community (Alvarez, 2002; Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009).

   While students are being exposed to racial discrimination and microaggressions on campus, they need to feel supported and welcomed in an environment that does not tolerate hate or
discrimination of any kind. The physical and intellectual space provided by culture centers can allow students to explore their racial identity in an environment that allows interaction and engagement in addressing critical issues as a racially marginalized population with fellow peers and professional staff (Hune, 2002). Understanding the Asian American population contributes to the improvement of “developing policies, programs and services… to the needs of students” (Hune, 2002, p.12).

There is a lack of literature and knowledge including Asian American students in theories and identity development models. This research will be framed through a critical race theory perspective by exploring race as omnipresent in various environments, and sharing narratives and experiences of students of racial discrimination (Buenavista et al., 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013).

This research will be aim to capture the student’s perspective on the utilization of cultural centers to explore their racial identity in a predominantly White community. This study will utilize qualitative experiences from undergraduate students and examine if there are common themes around the experiences within the responses.

9. Subject Population

- A description of participant characteristics: Participants will be full-time, domestic, undergraduate students at Oregon State University. Participants will need to self-identify as an Asian American to participate in this study. Participants will have had experience as a student leader or an active student member within the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center. Students will be selected solely at Oregon State University to allow the student researcher to be in continuous contact with the target population.

- Total target enrollment number: Twenty-five students. No more than ten students will be interviewed for this study.

- Inclusion and exclusion criteria: To be eligible in this study, participants must be currently involved as an active student leader or member within the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center for one or more years.

- Recruitment: Potential participants will be recruited via email invitations utilizing the roster of student leaders and members within the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center. The recruitment email will include:
  - Title of the study
  - Name of the PI and the student researcher
  - Clear statement that this is research
  - Contact information of the PI and student researcher
  - Purpose of the research
  - Primary criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the study

- Those interested in participating will be invited to contact the student researcher via an OSU email account. Respondents will be coded to maintain participant confidentiality. To protect the privacy of participants, the student researcher will not create or use personal email accounts or place any data files associated with this study on public computers. All computer files related to this study will be password protected.

- The student researcher will mail consent forms to participants who identify with the qualifications. This will allow the possible subjects to review the eligibility requirements before they agree to enroll in the study. Consent forms, which will be collected at the time of the interview, will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

- Chronological Sequence
  - Recruit interview participants – subjects should be listed as over 18
  - Conduct audio-recorded interviews with self-volunteered participants
  - Member checking of interview transcripts
  - Code audio interviews to maintain privacy of participants
10. Consent Process

- **Describe where and when consent will be obtained** – Consent will be obtained after the initial contact email has been received from participating indicating that they are interested in participating in the study. The consent form will be in written format and obtained in person in a private setting. The researcher will document verbal consent.

- **Assessment of comprehension** - Consent forms will be sent via email after participants have indicated interest and meet the eligibility requirements. The student researcher will inform the participants to read the consent form thoroughly and ask them if they have any questions or concerns. Also, this will be addressed in person to make sure they understood the consent form and to give them the option to decline participation. They will be informed that during the interview process, they will be audio recording and notes may be taken and that their information will be stored in a password protected file by pseudonyms, and their personal identification information will be stored separately in a file and in a different location. They will also be informed that they have the option to not to answer all the questions, as well as to opt out from the study at any given time. Additionally the researcher will inform them that if they choose to withdraw from the study before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected from them and that information may be included in study reports.

11. Eligibility Screening

- Initial eligibility qualifications will be addressed within the email invitation calling for participants. After written consent has been obtained, the researcher will review eligibility qualifications with the participants to ascertain whether they meet the study requirements of being a full-time student currently enrolled at Oregon State University.

- In case the participants do not qualify, all the information obtained (paper and electronic forms) will be immediately deleted. The paper forms will be disposed appropriately through shredding and confidential disposal containers at OSU. Any electronic forms will be deleted permanently from the student researcher’s computer.

- Prior to the screening questions, the researcher will explain to the participants the purpose of the study as well as the method of interview. They will be informed that they will be audio recorded and hand-written notes will be taken during the interview. They will also be informed that the interview will likely last no more than two hours.

12. Methods and Procedures

- This research will be guided by a qualitative method using semi-structured interviews, and a narrative inquiry methodology to understand and identify the lived experiences of Asian American students and their participation in the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). A qualitative method was chosen to understand the student’s experiences and utilize their perspectives and voices to centralize the importance of individuals constructing their own reality (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry was the chosen methodology for the research to allow participants the opportunity to share their lived experiences and to emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation.

- **Data Collection**

  Participants in this study will be required to be full-time students who identify as Asian American, and are active participants in the Asian & Pacific Cultural Center.

  A recruitment email will be sent to members within the Asian & Pacific Cultural center who meet the criteria, and will be asked to volunteer to participate in the study. There will be no more than ten participants will be chosen to participate in the study. The individual interviews will take no longer than two hours and all interviews will be required to be audio-recorded. After obtaining written informed consent and ensuring eligibility, the student researcher will ask ten semi-structured questions to understand the experiences of students cultivating their racial identity at a predominantly White
institution with the support of cultural centers. The participant is free to skip any question they would prefer not to answer.

To ensure confidentiality of the participants in the study, they will be asked to select their own pseudonym throughout the research. Individual interviews will take place in a private academic or co-curricular room on campus. The door will be closed with a sign on the door to not be disturbed.

- **Data Analysis**

  Following each individual interview, the student researcher will transcribe the recorded transcripts. To ensure validity of the transcripts, the student researcher will offer member checking to the participants to ensure the responses are reflected accurately. The student researcher will hand code the transcripts using a data analysis procedure. A research journal will be utilized to write reflections, questions, and comments while coding to fully analyze the transcripts.

  The student researcher will utilize the data analysis procedure outlined by Creswell (2008) to include: reading through the text data; dividing the text into segments of information; labeling the segments of information with codes; reducing any overlap or redundancy within these codes; and finally, collapsing codes into themes (p. 251).

13. **Compensation**

   Participants will receive no compensation.

14. **Costs**

   None.

15. **Anonymity or Confidentiality**

   - In accordance with the regulations, the PI will securely store all study related documents and data for three years post study termination. Coded information will be kept on a password-protected external hard drive in a locked safe at the principal investigator’s university office to ensure secure storage. Data will remain on said device for a minimum of three years. No direct identifiers will be stored after finishing interviews. No outside researchers will be privy to the identifiers used to code participants.

   - During the research process, the first and last name as well as the email addresses of interview participants will be stored separately from the records of the interview sessions. The audio recordings and text documents collected from the interview will be kept in a password-protected file, accessible only to the researchers. Participants’ identifiable information will be kept in a separate password protected electronic document with a coded filename.

   - The researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study.

   - The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings in a private room using headphones. During the transcription, the researcher will use participants’ pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The researcher will use her laptop to transcribe the audio files to Word document files. The transcribed files will be password-protected. Only the principle investigator and student research will have access to the password.

16. **Risks**

   - The foreseeable probability of harm or injury (physical, psychological, social, or economic) occurring because of participation in a research study is minimal. The risks are minimal for participants because they are also able to opt out at any time in the study. The time that is involved in the interview portion of the study is also restricted to two hours maximum. Furthermore, to reduce psychological harm, a constructivist approach will be taken, meaning that multiple truths may exist in the world and students will not be judged negatively based on
their responses. The individual stories of students are important for this work. Potential risks, though low, may include emotional reactions with regard to participants reflecting upon their personal opinions and beliefs about identity development.

- Since participants are students at Oregon State University, there is a risk that they could be identified based upon their interview responses. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms will be used during the study. Participants will be selecting their own pseudonyms.

- Since participants are selected based on racial and ethnic identification, the researcher is aware of the risks including student ethnic or racial groups under study. The confidentiality procedures will be followed in an effort to keep the population as non-identifiable as possible.

- The researcher is using email to communicate with participants in this study. There is a risk that the security and confidentiality of information sent by email cannot be guaranteed. Information sent by email can be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or contain viruses. To minimize these risks, the researchers will not open any email accounts, or data files on any public computers. Only private password-protected computers and/or OSU computers with authenticated password logins will be used to access any materials related to this study. This study will not collect any private information via email. Email will only be used for scheduling interviews/focus groups.

17. Benefits

- The benefits of this research will fill a gap in the existing literature for qualitative research of intersecting racial identity development and the role and support of cultural centers in the process. This study could give professionals a framework for how to support students in exploring their racial identity development at public universities.

- This study is not designed to benefit participants directly. This study has foreseeable benefits in understanding and knowledge about racial identity development within cultural centers at predominantly White institutions.

18. Assessment of Risk: Benefit ratio

- The foreseeable probability of harm or injury (physical, psychological, social, or economic) occurring as a result of participation in a research study is minimal. The risks are minimal for participants because they are also able to opt out at any time in the study. The time that is involved in the interview portion of the study is also restricted to two hours maximum. Furthermore, to reduce psychological harm, a constructivist approach will be taken, meaning that multiple truths may exist in the world and students will not be judged negatively based on their responses. The individual stories of students are important for this work.

- This study has foreseeable benefits in understanding and knowledge around the racial identity development of public university students and will be contributed to published literature.

- The benefits outweigh the risks within this study.